Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development

Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)

Grant Recipient: Alaska Congress of Parents and Teachers **Federal Tax ID:** 23-7302803

Project Title:

Alaska Congress of Parents and Teachers - Military Coalition Meeting

State Funding Requested: $ 40,000 **House District:** Statewide (1-40)
One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Military families coming together with the various military affiliated groups to determine the best ways to develop, fund and deliver benefits to military families of all types.

Funding Plan:

Total Cost of Project: $40,000

Funding Secured		Other Pending Requests		Anticipated Future Need	
Amount	*FY*	*Amount*	*FY*	*Amount*	*FY*

There is no other funding needed

Explanation of Other Funds:

Alaska PTA is doing the facilitating and organizing Naitonal Military Family Association is paying for two people to come from D.C

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

With the deployments that have just been announced and with previous extensions we really don't know what the families need, what the state can provide and where the biggest needs are, we can guess are medical, emotional counseling, housing, transportation, etc. But these conversations are to seek input, find the holes, find out what each military service has to offer and make determinations of what is needed. The goal is to bring the service providers together with the benefit recipients and make the necessary connections and find out how the best connections can be made for the least amount of cost and largest benefit to the military families.

Project Timeline:

Funds will be spent in FY 09.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

N/A

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Contact Name: Paula Pawlowski
Phone Number: 907-279-9345
Address: PO Box 2011496, Anchorage, AK 99524
Email: nwtstraining@ak.net

For use by Co-chair Staff Only:

3:56 PM 4/29/2008

Contact Name: Josh Applebee
Contact Number: 465-4939

FY 2009 Capital Budget TPS Report 47378

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Contact Name: Josh Applebee
Contact Number: 465-4939

For use by Co-chair Staff Only:

3:56 PM 4/29/2008

THE Voice FOR Military Families

September 2006
Vol. 17, No. 9

Happy Birthday Air Force!

In This Issue

NMFA
National Military Family Association

Serving the families of the seven uniformed services: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Military and Civilian Parents Share the Same Concerns

By Michelle Joyner, Director, Communications

Army General Richard Cody shares his insight on resources for parents of service members at a recent NMFA luncheon event. General Cody and Mrs. Jeanine Hayden, NMFA representative and wife of CIA Director General Michael Hayden were two of the eight distinguished panelists all with children currently serving in the military.

Many times, when we talk about "serving on the homefront," we talk of the role the spouses, the wives or husbands of nearly half of our service members, play. We also talk of the impact of a service member's work on their children, since more than 40% of service members have kids. Often times though, we fail to remember that 100% of our service members have parents. Although not always military ID card holders, parents are military family members too.

At a recent National Military Family Association luncheon, a panel of senior military leaders and their spouses who are parents of children in the Service discussed the issues concerning this under-served population. On the panel were General and Mrs. Richard Cody, USA; General Benjamin Griffin, USA; Brigadier General and Mrs. Michael Regner, USMC; Command Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rodney McKinley, USAF; Sheila Casey, NMFA Board of Governors' member and wife of General George Casey, Commanding General, Multinational Forces Iraq; and Jeanine Hayden, a long-time NMFA Representative who is the wife of General Michael Hayden, newly confirmed Director of the CIA.

As service members and military spouses, the panelists are in a unique position to understand the challenges and victories that lie ahead in their children's careers. At the same time, they are parents who rejoice and worry with each new assignment. General Cody recounted "Someone once asked

continued on page 3

Privacy Policy

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) is aware of the need to keep private information secure and confidential. We consider this a top priority. We do not collect any information about you that can identify you as an individual except for the information collected to acquire membership. We do not share any of your personal information with any other group, and NMFA does not sell any names or mailing lists to outside groups.

NMFA
National Military Family Association

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Alexandria, VA 22302-1601
(800) 260-0218
www.nmfa.org

FROM THE Chairman

By Tanna Schmidli, NMFA Chairman of the Board of Governors

September is the time of year when most of the moves have been made and you're almost settled into your new home, trying to heal from leaving friends, making new ones, getting everyone ready for school, and signing up for the fall activities…in other words, you are "off and running!"

One important aspect of living on many of our installations is having the schools our children attend near our homes. These neighborhood schools, filled with parental support and volunteers, PTA's, and teachers, who are aware of the lives our children live, are essential to the security and stability of our children and families. These schools that make sure our children are safe, employ many military spouses, and produce high test scores are indeed something our families must continue to support. In fact, many families elect to live in military housing because they know the "on-post" schools are where their children are comfortable and excel. I have always looked at our installation schools as one of the most priceless and necessary benefits.

Dr. David Chu, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, invited NMFA to participate in a DoD Education Roundtable. As NMFA's representative I was joined by seven other organizations working to ensure that education, growth and maturity of our children are top priorities. I was pleased to learn from Dr. Chu and his staff at the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), that plans and pilot programs are underway. Dr. Chu's efforts are very much appreciated.

This is one of the reasons I am so honored to be associated with NMFA. We are regularly requested to participate and share the important thoughts of our constituents at the highest levels. Your VOICE is important! While this is a fact NMFA has always known, I am pleased to inform you that our government leaders also hear and respect your views.

Sincerely,

Tanna

Tanna K. Schmidli

Military and Civilian Parents Share the Same Concerns
continued from page 1

me, 'aren't you worried about your sons?' I said, 'sure, but I'm not worried about them being led properly, I'm not worried about them not being coached, trained, [or] mentored. I'm not worried that there's not someone out there caring about them, because this is a different force. We've spent 20-30 years investing in our leaders.'"

BGen Regner touched on a topic with which all agreed upon, "We're trained for combat, but how much training do the moms and dads who stay back have?" Jeanine Hayden added "It is incumbent upon leaders to make sure they let the parents know there are services for them." CMSAF McKinley stressed the importance of integrating parents into the unit and encouraged parents to be involved in their children's military lives.

"The trend we are seeing in all the Services is that parents are involved more than ever. They want to be connected. Parents and grandparents want information regardless if they [the service members] are married" said Vicki Cody. Because, she said, "Everyone is affected by a service member's service whether they are deployed or not."

When discussing their personal experiences, Mrs. Cody shared with the audience that in the last five years, she has dealt with four deployments—those of her two sons and her husband. "It was like getting punched in the stomach. It literally takes the wind out of you." Sheila Casey added, "As a mother and parent, sending your child off is very different than sending your husband. You look at your husband as an adult, but your child is always your child and you'll always look at them that way."

Like all the parents on the panel, Mary Regner spoke with pride of her family's legacy, "Parents have a wonderful opportunity to give their children a legacy that they are doing something good in this world." Jeanine Hayden supported that sentiment when she talked of military children who are now serving, "They've already paid their dues—already done their part—and they are stepping up again. And as a mother, I am very proud."

When the discussion wrapped up, Sheila Casey left the audience with this to consider, "I can't tell you how many people have said to me, 'we see these people, like your husband, on television and we never think that he is a father, a husband, that he is a grandfather.' They don't look at these [service members] as people who have families…they are just in the military. I really think that is a huge problem—I ask that you help us with that."

As General Cody said, "It is going to take a national effort to support families." ■

Mrs. Mary Jo Myers, wife of the recently retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers spends a moment with friends Lynn Pace, wife of the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace and NMFA Board of Advisors member LtGen Richard Swope (Ret).

Eight panelists, active duty members and spouses of active duty members, all with children serving in the military gathered to discuss how to best support the parents of service members. It is an issue close to the hearts of many regardless of rank or branch of Service. More than a third of those in the audience also have a child currently serving in the military.

NMFA Chairman of the Board, Tanna K. Schmidli and General Benjamin Griffin chat before the event.

NMFA Selects Honorees for Support of Military Families Award

By Joyce Wessel Raezer, Director, Government Relations

The NMFA Board of Governors will honor four individuals and the Department of Defense (DoD) program *America Supports You* with its *Support of Military Family Award* at the Association's 2004 Congressional Reception. The awards to Senator Carl Levin (D-MI); Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH); Gerald Leeling, professional staff member of the Senate Armed Services Committee; and Dr. Jean Silvernail, of the DoD Office of Military Community and Family Policy, will be presented at the reception on September 27.

Senator Carl Levin (D-MI)

NMFA is honoring Senator Levin for his continuing efforts on behalf of military families, especially the survivors of those who die on active duty. A long-time Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Levin has served in the leadership, first as Chairman of the Committee from June 2001 through January 2003 and since then as Ranking Member. He has consistently worked to improve the quality of life for uniformed service members and their families through his oversight of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

From the very first month of the 109th Congress, Senator Levin led efforts to provide equitable survivor benefits for those who had made the greatest sacrifice. These efforts culminated in the inclusion of language in the FY 2006 NDAA awarding the increased death gratuity AND Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) to the survivors of ALL those killed on active duty since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan. The extension of the enhanced death benefits to all survivors was the number one issue for NMFA in 2005 and we are grateful for Senator Levin's untiring effort to have it realized. NMFA heard from many grateful families who were relieved and gratified to learn that their service member's death was not a "second rate sacrifice."

Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH)

NMFA recognizes Senator DeWine for his work in the 109th Congress on behalf of those who have made the greatest sacrifice, the survivors of those service members who die while on active duty. Senator DeWine sponsored legislation to provide an increase in the military death gratuity to $100,000 and in SGLI to $400,000. He introduced the amendment in the Senate version of the FY 2006 NDAA to extend the increased death gratuity and SGLI benefit to ALL survivors.

Senator DeWine's concern for surviving military children was evidenced in the FY 2006 NDAA by his proposal to extend active duty family member TRICARE benefits to these children. In addition, he has worked for necessary technical changes in the SBP child option. He has encouraged awareness of and support for the mental health needs of deployed and returning service members and their families. Senator DeWine has also worked to limit TRICARE Prime enrollment fee increases for uniformed service retirees, expand health care coverage for the reserve component through TRICARE Reserve Select, and secure retroactive coverage for wounded service members under the Traumatic Service Members Group Life Insurance (TSGLI).

Gary Leeling, Minority Counsel, Senate Armed Services Committee

Gary Leeling has been a long-time friend of military families and NMFA. As the Minority staff member for the Personnel Subcommittee, Mr. Leeling is in the unique position of dealing with the full range of personnel, compensation, benefit, health care, and family support issues. He approaches these individual issues in much the same way NMFA does: by looking at the connections, looking for how changes in one benefit or program will affect others, and by focusing on what is needed for the people this country relies upon to keep the force strong. Even before the beginning of the war on terrorism, he was an advocate for robust family programs because he instinctively understands the link between strong families and a strong force. In recent years, he has constantly sought out information on what families need and has worked to see those needs are met, whether through funding, improved programs, or expanded benefits. Mr. Leeling assisted Senator Levin's efforts to ensure equitable benefits would be provided for all survivors of active duty deaths, understanding that all of today's service members are ready to serve where ever they assigned.

Dr. Jean Silvernail, Department of Defense State Liaison Office

NMFA recognizes Dr. Silvernail for her tireless dedication in support of quality education and support for military school children. Dr. Silvernail has been the DoD point person for the Military Child in Deployment and Transition since 2000. In her position in the Office of Military Community and Family Policy, Dr. Silvernail facilitates the Department's efforts to improve quality education for military children by assisting families, commanders, and school districts in easing the unique challenges children face due to deployment and frequent moves. NMFA has been impressed with the many positive steps the Department has taken in recent years to create links between the Department, individual Services, military installations, and all schools educating military children. Dr. Silvernail was the guiding force behind the creation and content of the DoD education website, MilitaryStudent.org. This year, she brought together a team of Service representatives, school district personnel, military leaders, military parents, and associations such as NMFA to create a set of three toolkits to assist families, school districts, and military leaders in easing military students transition. These toolkits provide useful information for any family facing a move, as well as any installation or school district serving military children.

"America Supports You"

NMFA honors the DoD program *America Supports You* for its contributions in increasing the connectivity between the many individuals and organizations—large and small—interested in supporting service members and families. By highlighting those efforts to uplift the troops, it also inspires others to assist them and their families in practical and meaningful ways. One of the clear messages that came across in the research for NMFA's 2004 report, *Serving the Homefront,* was that military families depend on their civilian communities for support. The large number of new military-related nonprofit groups, particularly "Mom and Pop" groups, that have sprung up with the purpose of supporting service members and their families shows that communities want to rise to meet this need. The *America Supports You* website and corresponding programs provide a means to connect those who need support with local organizations that can help. Additionally, *America Supports You* gives these supporting organizations much needed publicity to get their message out, inform the community about the resources they provide, and attract financial supporters and volunteers. Its efforts also let service members and families know their service and sacrifice are recognized and appreciated. ■

Call to Action

Volunteer "Call to Action"

By Allison Higgins, Deputy Director of VS &R

Picture this. You just moved to a new town. You're in an empty, new home with boxes stacked to the ceiling. You're stressed for many reasons; your kids are about to attend a new school and you're having no luck finding a job. Your last nerve is on the verge of snapping when the phone (which just got service yesterday) rings.

Sound familiar? Frustrated with life you unwillingly answer the phone. On the other end of the line, you hear a warm, soothing voice ask for you. She introduces herself. You learn she is a fellow spouse and a member of your service member's unit Family Readiness Group. She welcomes you to the area, offers you her contact information and says to call her anytime. Realizing you're not alone, the cold feeling of isolation melts away.

Believe it or not, that person who performed the simple act of making a phone call made one of the biggest, most positive differences in someone else's life.

That one person performing a small act and making a huge impact is a **volunteer.**

Picture this. It's 1969 and the Vietnam War is raging. U.S. soldiers are dying.

Military widows are left behind to grieve without a survivor benefit program. That is, until a group of uniformed service wives and widows gathered at a kitchen table in Maryland. The topic was the inadequate government effort to provide financial security to survivors of uniformed service personnel and retirees. Such benefits at that time were self-funded.

Instead of simply bemoaning the situation, these wives decided to act. Their efforts, joined with others, resulted in Congress creating the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). This action was also the catalyst that led these activist women to form the Military Wives Association, the precursor of the National Military Family Association. This mighty group of four who moved mountains to benefit military families for generations to come was comprised of **volunteers.**

Today, the National Military Family Association has a global **volunteer corps** helping to "move mountains" everyday. NMFA values its volunteers and the endless work they perform providing NMFA with knowledge, compassion, energy and time to improve the lives of those military families representing our country's seven uniformed services: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

If you would like to contribute your "voice" to the hundreds already part of NMFA's "Voice for Military Families"—**Become a Volunteer.**

Visit our website for more information, *www.nmfa.org.* For questions contact the NMFA Volunteer Services and Representatives Department at: 1-800-260-0218 or *vsradmin@nmfa.org.* ■

Summer Break = A Break from Deployment Stress

The Global War on Terrorism has brought with it many changes, including multiple deployments, Reservist units suddenly activated making families "suddenly military," and lengthy, deployment extensions. All of these situations leave military kids feeling the stress of separation. Missed birthday celebrations, graduations, sporting events, and other milestones are just the beginning of what kids talk about when asked about their deployed loved one. They also struggle with anger, loneliness, and worry while their parent is away.

Operation Purple, a camping program of the National Military Family Association, has been reaching out to these kids for three years now with free summer camps and the message that they are not alone. We recognize that kids serve, too!

The camps teach coping and leadership skills, in a fun, summer camp atmosphere, to help military kids through their stressful times. Perhaps the best part of the camp is having fun with others experiencing similar situations, making friends and establishing a support network that crosses all service-branch boundaries. These programs are a much-needed resource which is generously funded through donations.

To see one of the camps in action check out the CBS morning show report at *www.operationpurple.org.* ■

The Ramos Family, Morgan, Jennifer, CWO Benedict J. Ramos, and son, Rudy.

NMFA Family of the Month— *September*

The Ramos family has been selected as the September NMFA Family of the Month for being a role model in giving; giving of their time, talent, and treasure in support of numerous humanitarian outreach programs in their neighborhood. The family actively support and participate in fundraisers and events that help families in financial distress and homeless citizens. They are leaders in their church, school, and local hospital support programs and participate in programs to; aid children of incarcerated parents, clean-up their neighborhood, and support cancer research.

If you know a family like the Ramos family that exemplifies the best of the military family lifestyle, nominate them at *www.nmfa.org/familyaward*. They may win $500 and be nominated for the NMFA Family of the Year, an additional cash prize and trip.

The NMFA Family Award is proudly sponsored by Nestlé, USA and the Association of Military Banks of America. ■

Salute to

Parents of Military Members—Often in the Shadows

By TSgt Jeffrey Rogers, Kunsan AB, Republic of Korea

One lesser-known fact about our American military is the date of its inception. Our military was authorized by Congress on the last day of its very first session, on September 29, 1789. This fact is surprising to many, considering our Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776.

At that time, America had an army, a colonial army—the Continental Army, serving under the auspices of the Continental Congress. Since the establishment of the United States of America was official, we needed an "official" army. This was to be one of the first items to be tackled by the new Congress, but movement on this provision to the U.S. Constitution was delayed. In fact, it was after considerable prodding by President and Commander in Chief George Washington that Congress finally acted.

> "While it is tough for the spouse, significant other, and child, a parent feels a special pain when their child is away, in this case, to war."

Many conflicts and wars have come and gone since our military's inception in 1789. Our current war, the Global War on Terrorism, also started during the month of September and continues today. The events of September 11, 2001 have propelled our military into vast corners of the globe. We currently are deployed to various locations defeating terrorism, defending democracy, and protecting our national security. In other words our military is doing what it was created to do, what it has always done, and what it will always do.

Throughout our history, there has been one facet of the military family that consistently bears a unique burden in anguishing over the sacrifices made by military members—the parents of military members. Parents of military members are, in my opinion, sometimes forgotten when we speak of the "military family." We always seem to focus on how tough it may be for a spouse, significant other, or child left back at home while the military member is sent away to accomplish the mission. It isn't often we acknowledge the feelings of the father and mother of that service member. While it is tough for the spouse, significant other, and child, a parent feels a special pain when their child is away, in this case, to war.

I personally know this to be true. I recently left my family behind when I transferred to my remote assignment here in Korea. When I announced my impending assignment to my wife, she was a trooper; she took it in stride like a "military wife" would be expected to do. My children reacted in much the same manner, though upset; they knew it was something Daddy had to do.

When I told my parents about my assignment, the tension in the room could be cut with a knife. Sure, they understood what my nearly 19 years in the military was all about, but the fact that I would be going away left them more than worried. I think it is because a parent always wants to protect their child regardless of their age. A parent wants to be able to right the wrongs and, at least figuratively, kiss their "boo-boos" all better. A parent feels a unique emptiness when their child is placed into potentially harmful situations.

So, on this special 217th anniversary of the American military, take a moment to thank the parents of service members for their support. ■

Parents

Ask NMFA

By Kathleen Moakler, Deputy Director, Government Relations

Q: My daughter has been deployed. She's single and her father and I are her next of kin. We'd like to be in the loop about what's happening with her unit. What can we do to receive information?

A: When NMFA first answered this question in March 2003, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom were in their early days. Repeated deployments, reintegration, and other concerns with combat stress, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and wounded service members have caused support programs and resources to evolve as the needs have grown. To be in the communication loop, however, it is important that your daughter pass your name and contact information on to the coordinator for the unit family support/readiness group or rear detachment/party. This should at least get you on a group mailing list or e-mail list for updates about the unit.

It's important to remember that unit support services are staffed by volunteers. The group's ability to maintain contact with extended family members or significant others varies from unit to unit depending on the number of volunteers and time involved. Some units are lucky enough to have a parent volunteer who organizes the extended family/significant-other information chain. Some unit family groups are even led by parents.

For additional help in finding support while your daughter is deployed, you should also check your local community to see if social service agencies, Red Cross chapters, churches, or veterans' organizations offer support groups for families of deployed service members.

Sites listed on the NMFA website links page *www.nmfa.org/links,* such as the Deployment Health Family Readiness Library, Military Homefront, and USA4militaryfamilies, can be great resources for parents. The *Deployment and You* section of the NMFA website (*www.nmfa.org/deploymentandyou)* contains a wealth of information related to deployment, including an article explaining military family support services to parents.

NMFA has heard that some installations are offering reintegration classes for parents to attend when they come to welcome home their deployed service members. We hope this is a trend that will continue and expand.

Until that happens, you can find information in some of the many recently-published books dealing with combat stress and reintegration. Among these books are: *Down Range to Iraq and Back* by Bridget C. Cantrell, Ph.D and Chuck Dean; and *Courage After Fire* by Keith Armstrong, L.C.S.W./Susanne Best, Ph.D/Paula Domenici, Ph.D. The Red Cross offers *"COMING HOME: A Guide for Parents, Extended Family Members or Friends of Service Members Returning from Mobilization/Deployment,"* available at your local Red Cross chapter. Another great resource for all parents, regardless of their service member's affiliation, is *Your Soldier, Your Army* by Vicki Cody. You can download this book from the *Deployment and You* section of the NMFA website or order a hard copy for free from the Association of the United States Army (*www.ausa.org*).

NMFA invites everyone to tell us about additional helpful resources. Please email us at *families@nmfa.org* with your suggestions. ■

Visit *www.nmfa.org* to find excellent resources for parents.

Clip AND Save

By Theresa Donahoe, NMFA Representative, Fort Hood, Texas

Parents of Service Members

In light of today's conflicts around the world, the realization that your child has decided to enter military service brings many feelings, most notably anxiety and fear. As parents, you desperately want to support your children and their decisions as they enter adulthood, yet you have a hard time integrating the memories of the child you have raised since birth with the service men and women you now see in the evening news.

One proactive step that can be taken to support your son's or daughter's decision, and to become more comfortable with his or her new world, is to learn all you can about the military lifestyle and how you can be part of it. From learning acronyms and unit structures to exploring various information networks and available support services, family members can more readily understand the motivation for and experience the honor of being part of our all-volunteer force.

The following are a few steps to get you started:

- Communicate often with your child. Whether he is in basic training or she is deployed halfway across the world, take every opportunity to write letters and express your support.
- Learn about your child's chosen branch of Service. Browse official service websites to learn about their history and traditions, paying particular attention to their core values and structure.
- Ask your son or daughter for the name and web address of their unit and any information that can be found about the family center or family volunteer network associated with that unit. No matter what unit he is in or where she is stationed, there are family members or volunteers that will likely be able to help you keep informed about unit activities and opportunities to become involved as parents supporting your military child.
- Tell your child that you would like to be involved. Whether through unit newsletters or participation in unit-supported activities, show your child that you are open to this challenging and rewarding world in which he or she is now a part.

NMFA
National Military Family Association

Save the Date
Come Join Us!

NMFA members are cordially invited to attend
The 2006 NMFA Congressional Reception

Wednesday, September 27, 2006
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Room 902—Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC

RSVP no later than September 20 to:
families@nmfa.org
or 800-260-0218

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Join NMFA Today

You can also join or renew online! www.nmfa.org

Please complete this form and mail with payment to: National Military Family Association • 2500 North Van Dorn St., Suite 102 • Alexandria, VA 22302-1601 • (800) 260-0218. Spouse Clubs, Family Centers, and other organizations may contact NMFA for information about membership and donor programs.

Family Membership:

- ☐ $20 : One Year (Junior Military: $15 for current servicemembers with 5 years or less service)
- ☐ $50: Three Years
- ☐ $300: Life
- ☐ Please renew my membership (number_____) in the category designated above
- ☐ Other donation $_____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ___ Zip + 4 _____

Phone (___)_____ E-mail _____

Payment: _____ ☐ Cash ☐ Check
☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

- ☐ I would like to receive the NMFA Newsletter by e-mail.
- ☐ I would like to receive my free subscription to Military Money Magazine mailed to my home.
- ☐ I want to receive the weekly legislative up-date available by e-mail only.
- ☐ I do not wish to receive any of the above.

Please complete all applicable items for our membership records.

	Spouse	Servicemember
Name		
Status (Active Duty, Retired, National Guard, Reserve, Deceased, Divorced, Widowed, Veteran, Other)		
Branch of Service		
Rank/Rate by pay grade		
Zip Code where you vote		

in household _____

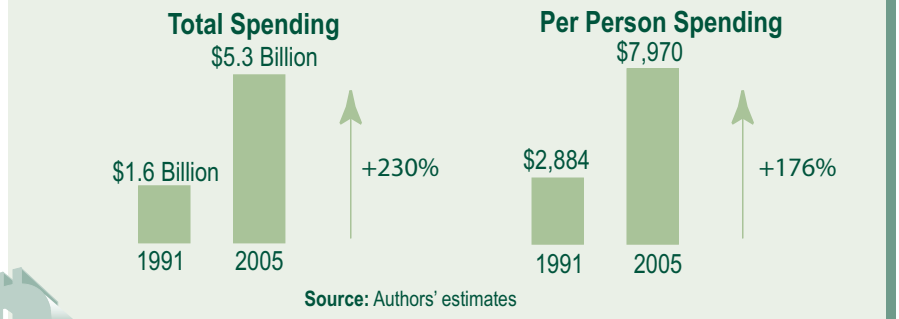
Name of Closest military installation _____

Alaska's $5 Billion Health Care Bill—Who's Paying?

By Mark Foster and Scott Goldsmith

March 2006
UA Research Summary No. 6
Institute of Social and Economic Research • University of Alaska Anchorage

Figure 1. Growth in Alaska Health-Care Spending, 1991-2005



Source: Authors' estimates

Spending for health care in Alaska topped $5 billion in 2005. Just how big is $5 billion? It is, for perspective, one-third the value of North Slope oil exports in 2005—a year of high oil prices. It's nearly one-sixth the value of everything Alaska's economy produced last year.

In 1991, health-care spending in Alaska was about $1.6 billion. Even after we take population growth into account, spending for health care increased 176% per Alaskan in 15 years. These soaring costs are taking a growing share of family and government budgets, increasing labor costs, and putting businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

The $5.3 billion in spending in 2005 was all for the 665,000 people who live in Alaska, but individuals didn't pay all the bills. They paid nearly 20% out of their pockets and through payroll deductions. Businesses (including non-profits) and governments paid about 80%. Of course, individual Alaskans and other Americans indirectly pay all these costs, because they buy goods and services, own businesses, and pay taxes.

What does health-care spending buy? Stays in the hospital, visits to doctors and dentists, prescription drugs, and more, as well as program administration and public health programs. Our estimates don't include capital expenditures.[1]

Who pays the bills, and how has that burden shifted as spending increased?

• *Private and government employers spent about $2 billion for employee health-care coverage in 2005.* For comparison, they paid $11.8 billion in wages in 2005. With rising costs, businesses and governments have become increasingly likely to pay health-care bills themselves—"self-insure"—rather than pay through insurance premiums.

• *Alaska households spent just over $1 billion for health care in 2005, up from $361 million in 1991.* That includes everything individual Alaskans spent—not only their out-of-pocket costs, but also what was deducted from their paychecks to help pay for health coverage through their employers.

• *Governments spent $2.2 billion for health care programs in 2005, up from $736 million in 1991*. Medicaid spending was almost $1 billion.

Health-care spending could double again by 2013, if current trends continue. Why are costs of medical care so high, and why are they increasing faster than everything else? Why have health-care costs in Alaska stayed higher than U.S. averages, even as other costs moved closer to national levels? Are we getting better care now? Who can't afford care?

We're starting to assemble data to help answer those questions. Alaskans face some hard choices about how to control costs but still have a health-care system that provides good care and is accessible to everyone. We hope to provide some useful insights.

This publication is the first step in ISER's research on the health-care industry. It starts with our new estimates of spending and of changes since 1991, when we last looked at health-care spending.[2] But cost alone is only one part of the complicated health-care story, and here we also begin looking at:

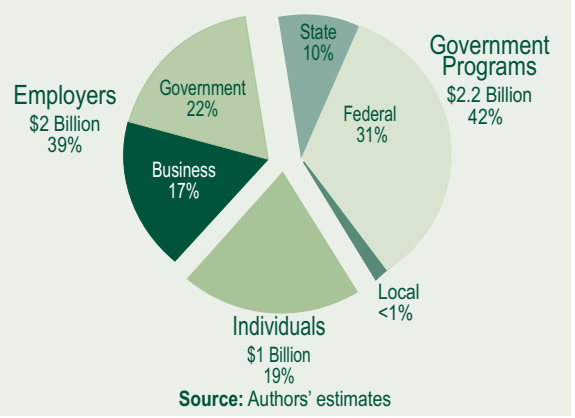
• Who are the most expensive patients? Our analysis of national data shows that the average "high-cost" patients aren't as expensive as you might think.

• Who is more likely to have health insurance provided through their jobs at a reasonable cost? Single people working for big companies.

• How does use of the health care system in the U.S. compare with use in other countries? Canadians and Australians seem to use their systems about as much.

• What is driving costs? Despite what many people think, there are no simple explanations: it's a puzzle with many pieces.

Figure 2. Who Pays The Bills?
(Total 2005 Spending: $5.3 Billion)



Source: Authors' estimates

Understanding Alaska (UA) is a special series of ISER research studies examining Alaska economic development issues . The studies are paid for by the University of Alaska Foundation. UA reports are available from ISER's offices and at: **www.alaskaneconomy.uaa.alaska.edu**

Organization of Summary

We first describe what health-care dollars buy—what shares go to doctors, hospitals, drugs, and other expenses. Then we look in more detail at our estimates of health-care spending in 2005 and the changes since 1991. We think our estimates are a good effort to update our previous work. But the health-care industry is complex, and tracking all the spending is difficult.

After we talk about spending, we give readers a glimpse of related health-care issues. In some cases we have no Alaska data and rely on national figures, which are still useful in illustrating important issues.

Pages 4, 5, and 6 discuss access to, use of, and benefits from the health-care system: who is uninsured; who has health-care coverage and how that coverage is provided; which patients get the costliest care; how Americans' use of medical care compares with use by people in other industrialized countries; and whether we've gotten healthier in exchange for more spending.

Page 7 summarizes what we know about how medical costs in Alaska differ from the U.S. average, and page 8 concludes with a discussion about the many things that may be driving health-care costs.

Keep in mind that population growth and general inflation account for part of the increase in health-care spending since 1991. Alaska's population increased from about 570,000 in 1991 to 665,000 by 2005. Also, prices for everything Americans buy also went up, by about 43% nationwide and 39% in Anchorage. But prices of medical care nearly doubled (Figure 3).

What Are We Buying?

Figure 4 shows that as of 2000, more than 70% of Alaska's health-care spending was for hospital care and visits to doctors. Prescription drugs accounted for about 9% and dental care 7%. The "other" category includes medical products, health care provided on the job and in schools, and Medicaid payments for in-home care.

Nursing home and home health care made up only 2% of health-care spending in 2000, far short of the U.S. average of 11%—and that share actually dropped between 1990 and 2000, despite fast growth in the number of Alaskans over 65. There has been a shift in how long-term care is provided in Alaska. A change in Medicaid allowed payment for in-home and assisted-living care for people who would otherwise have been cared for in nursing homes.

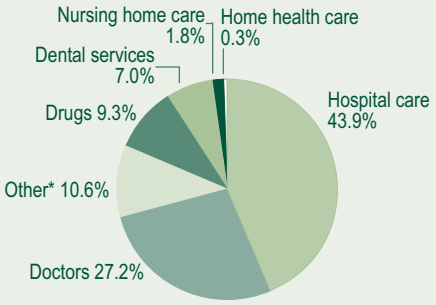
All types of health-care spending grew rapidly since 1990, but the fastest growth was in prescription drugs and the "other" category (described in the footnote to Figure 4).

How Has Spending Changed?

Table 1 details who paid for health-care in 2005. Figures 5 and 6 show changes in levels and shares of spending from 1991 to 2005.

• Growth in government spending wasn't uniform. The federal government's share of spending increased (Figure 5). Costs for Medicare and Medicaid more than quadrupled and costs for the Indian Health Service doubled.

Figure 4. What Are We Buying?
(Alaska Health Care Spending, 2000)



*Includes, among other things, durable and non-durable medical products, direct services employers provide employees, government expenditures in schools, and Medicaid payments that allow people to be cared for at home instead of in institutions.
Source: Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services

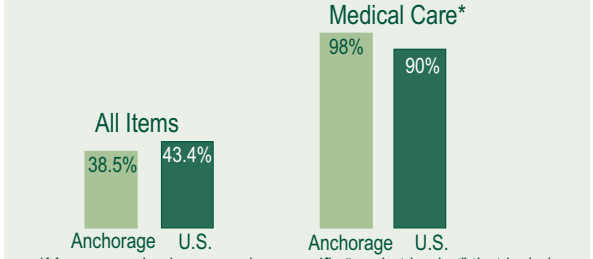
• State government's share dropped, partly because the federal government paid a bigger share of Medicaid costs in 2005 than in 1991.[3]

• Local government is the smallest government spender, but the local share of spending increased, mostly because of growing costs for employee health coverage.

• Employers saw the fastest growth. Combined spending by private and government employers increased about 290% (Figure 6).

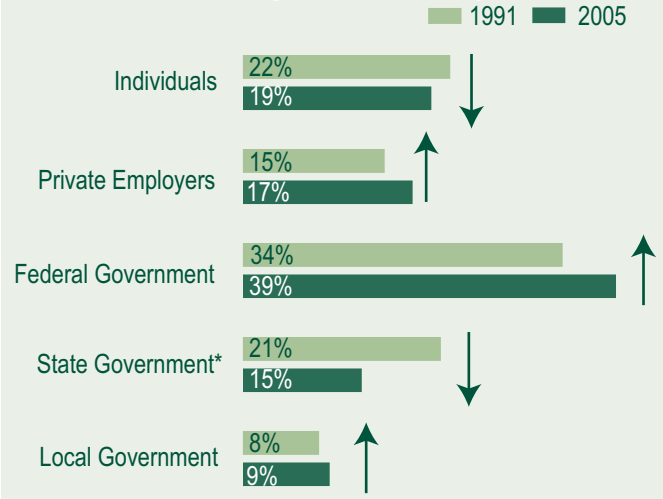
• Spending by individual Alaskans didn't go up as much—184%—but the $1 billion they spent in 2005 was still more than the $922 million businesses spent.

Figure 3. Increase in Consumer Price Index Anchorage and U.S., 1991-2005



*Measures price increases in a specific "market basket" that includes hospital care, visits to doctors and dentists, nursing home care, and medical supplies; also indirectly measures increases in health insurance premiums.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, Anchorage and U.S. City Average

Figure 5. How Did Shares of Spending Change From 1991 to 2005, Among Those Who Buy Health Care?



*See endnote 3, page 8. Note: Totals may not add to 100% because of rounding.
Source: Authors' estimates

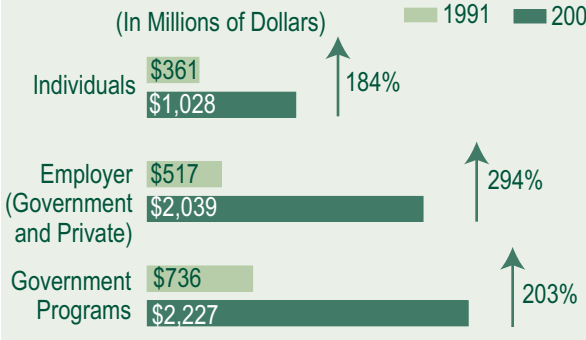
Table 1. Health-Care Spending in Alaska, Fiscal Year 2005
(Total Spending: $5.3 Billion)

Who Provides the Coverage?	Who Buys the Care? (In Million of Dollars)					
	Individuals	Businesses	Local Government	State Government	Federal Government	Total
Individuals	**$1,028**					**$1,028**
Out-of-pocket costs	$431					
Individual policies	$276					
Payments for employer-based insurance	$320					
Employers (Including retiree coverage)		**$922**	**$454**	**$252**	**$411**	**$2,039**
Insurance Premiums		$303	$103	$72	$75	
Self-Insured Costs[a]		$485	$352	$180	$115	
Military Medical Costs					$221	
Worker's Compensation (medical benefits)		$134				
Government Health Programs			**$38**	**$535**	**$1,654**	**$2,227**
Medicare					$419	
Medicaid				$303	$667	
Other Public Programs						
Federal						
Indian Health Service Contracts					$401	
Veterans' Affairs					$105	
Community Health Centers					$29	
State						
Grant to local governments, private groups				$116		
API, Pioneers' Homes				$55		
Other State-Administered				$31		
Elementary and Secondary Schools			$3	$8	$33	
WAMI Medical Education				$2		
Department of Corrections				$21		
Local						
Health and hospital spending			$35			
Total Spending	**$1,028**	**$922**	**$492**	**$787**	**$1,950**	**$5,294**

[a]Many organizations that self-insure—that is, they pay some of their bills themselves—also still carry some insurance to help cover extraordinary risks.

Source: Authors' estimates Note: Totals may not sum because of rounding.

Figure 6. How Did Spending Change From 1991 to 2005, Among Those Who Provide Coverage?



Source: Authors' estimates

Biggest Kinds of Changes

- Individual Alaskans have seen big increases not only in costs they notice most—how much they have to pay out of their own pockets—but also in less obvious costs: deductions from their paychecks to pay their share of employer-based insurance.
- Both private and government employers became much more likely to self-insure. Self-insurance costs made up about two-thirds of combined employer spending for insurance premiums and self-insurance in 2005, up from about one-third in 1991.
- Spending for Medicaid more than quadrupled (from $215 million to $970 million), so that in 2005 it alone made up nearly $1 in every $5 of health-care spending. Analysts attribute the fast growth of Medicaid nationwide to growing numbers of eligible Americans, including low-paid workers whose employers don't provide coverage and low-income seniors; to program expansion; to increasing prices of medical care; and to treatment of medical conditions at lower thresholds.

Health-Care Coverage

Most Alaskans—an estimated 87%—have some form of health-care coverage, either through private insurance or government programs.[4] Some people have more than one kind of coverage, so the percentages in Figure 7 add to more than 100%.

Around 64% of Alaskans are covered by private insurance, 38% by government programs, and nearly 13% have no coverage. Nationwide, 68% of people are covered by private insurance, 30% by government programs, and close to 16% have no coverage.

Alaskans are more likely to have coverage through the military (reflecting the state's large number of active-duty and retired military); the Indian Health Service (because Alaska Natives make up 20% of the population); and Medicaid (the joint federal-state program mainly for low-income and disabled people). Fewer Alaskans are covered by Medicare, because fewer are over 65.

We don't know characteristics of the 13% of Alaskans with no health-care coverage, but we know that nationwide the uninsured are most likely to be young adults and to have annual incomes below $25,000 (Figure 8).

Children in Alaska are more likely to have coverage than both adults in Alaska and children nationwide. Figure 9 shows that about 8% of children in Alaska had no coverage in 2003, compared with the U.S. average of nearly 12%.[5] The smaller share of uninsured children in Alaska is probably due to the fact that Alaska Native children are eligible for care through the Indian Health Service, and also to the Denali KidCare program, an extension of Medicaid that provides coverage for low-income children without other coverage.

It's outside the scope of this summary to describe all the ways that families, communities, and governments are affected because millions of Americans lack health insurance. But a recent report by the National Academy of Sciences broadly summarized those effects. It found that the uninsured are in worse health; that uninsured children are more likely to have development delays; that the direct costs of caring for uninsured Americans fall heavily on local communities; and that governments pay hospitals large public subsidies to offset their costs for uncompensated care.[6]

The 64% of Alaskans with private insurance either pay for that coverage themselves (through individual policies) or are covered through their jobs and share the costs with their employers. Figures 10, 11, and 12 show how the rising costs of medical care have affected health-insurance coverage for Alaskans working for private industry.

• Health insurance in Alaska was already more expensive in the 1990s and still is. In 2003, insurance premiums for family coverage at private firms were about $10,500 in Alaska and $9,200 nationwide. By 2005, those premiums had jumped to an average of $11,268 nationally (Figure 10).

• Premiums are higher in Alaska, but workers here pay a smaller share, as Figure 11 shows. As of 2003, employees at private firms in Alaska paid 11% of the premiums for single-person coverage and 17% for family coverage, compared with 17% for single-person coverage and 25% for family coverage nationwide. But employers, especially at small firms, have been shifting more insurance costs to workers. The 2005 UBA-Ingenix Health Plan Survey found that employees of businesses nationwide paid 43% of the premiums for family coverage.

Figure 7. Health-Care Coverage, Alaska and U.S., 2004

	Private Insurance	Medicaid	Medicare	Military	IHS only*	None
Alaska	63.5%	15.3%	7.3%	11.6%	4.2%	12.8%
U.S.	68.1%	12.9%	13.7%	3.7%	N/A	15.7%

*Authors' adjustment. See endnote 4, page 8.

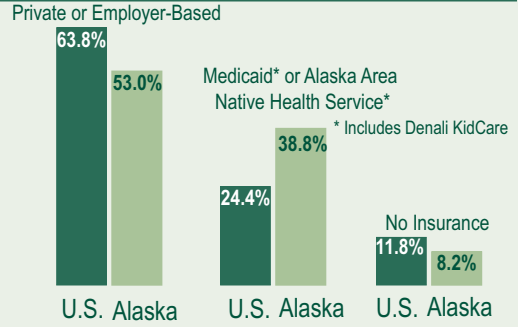
Note: Totals are more than 100% because some people have more than one coverage.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004

Figure 8. Who Is Most Likely To Be Uninsured in U.S.?

By Age	Percent Uninsured
18-24	31%
65+	1%
By Annual Income	
Less than $25,000	24%
$75,000+	8.4%

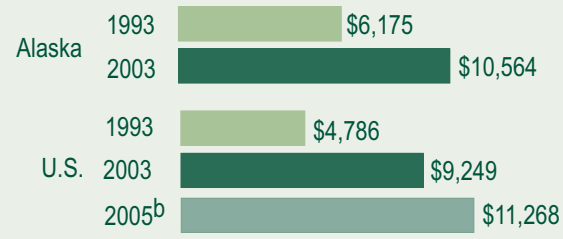
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the U.S.*, 2004

Figure 9. Health-Care Coverage for Children (18 and Under), Average 2001-2003



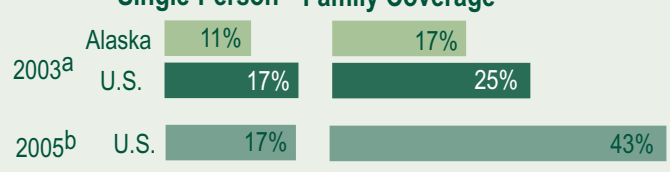
Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, adjusted U.S. Census data; see endnote 5, page 8.

Figure 10. Health Insurance Premiums For Family Coverage[a], Private Firms



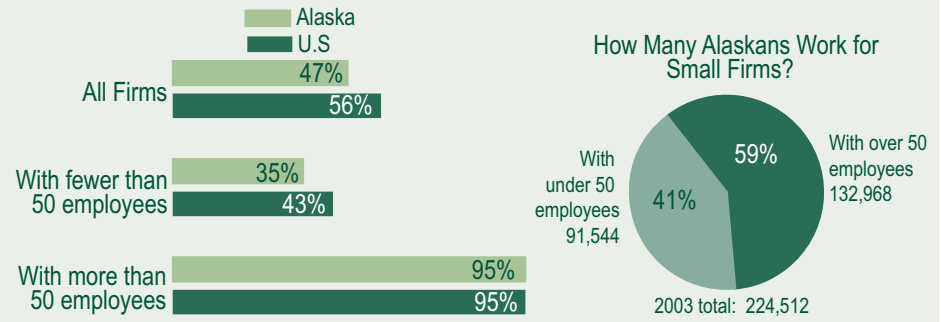
[a]Total costs shared by employer and employee. [b] Alaska figures for 2005 not available.
Sources: Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, U.S. Agency For Health Care Research and Quality, 2003; 2005 UBA/Ingenix *Health Plan Survey*

Figure 11. Share of Health Insurance Premiums Employees Pay
(At Private Firms Offering Health Insurance)



[a]Reported in Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, 2003
[b]Alaska 2005 figures not available; national figures from 2005 UBA/Ingenix *Health Plan Survey*

Figure 12. Private Firms Offering Health Insurance,* Alaska and U.S., 2003



* Not all workers at firms that offer insurance carry that insurance. **Source**: Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, 2003

• Small Alaska businesses are less likely to offer insurance coverage. Only about a third of those with fewer than 50 employees offer coverage, compared with 43% nationwide (Figure 12).

A lot of Alaskans work for small businesses. In 2003, about 91,500 of the state's 224,500 private-industry employees worked for businesses with fewer than 50 employees. That's more than 40% of all those with jobs in private industry.

Who Costs the Most and the Least?

We've talked about the costs of health care and of health-care coverage. Now we turn to the other side of the equation: who's getting the benefits of the spending?

Health-care spending in Alaska was close to $8,000 per person in 2005. But not everyone is average. The cost of care for a few is significantly higher than average, but for many it's only a few hundred dollars a year.

As a first step toward understanding who gets the benefits of health-care spending, ISER analyzed national data on the characteristics of high- and low-cost patients. That data is from a federal panel survey—that is, a survey that follows households over time.

As Figure 13 shows, just 5% of patients nationwide account for almost half of all health-care spending in any given year, while at the other extreme 50% of patients account for just 3% of spending in a year.

A lot of Americans tend to think that the most expensive patients are probably very old, or suffering from some catastrophic illness or injury, and are possibly uninsured.

The high-cost patients are older; health-care costs do go up as people age.[7] But their average age is 57, and fewer than 40% are over 65. The average bill for high-cost patients in 2002, under $20,000, doesn't reflect major illnesses or end-of-life care. Rather, it's for a few days in the hospital for surgery, several visits to doctors, and significant spending for prescription drugs. Few of the high-cost patients—2%—are uninsured.

The low-cost patients are mostly young, averaging 28 years old. They may see a doctor or a dentist once a year, and they pay almost half their modest medicals bills out of their pockets.

Many of the low-cost group—nearly 20%—are uninsured. The share of uninsured patients in this group tracks with what the National Academy of Sciences has reported: that the uninsured often don't have any medical costs at all in a year, and among those who do, their expenses are less than half the average for people under 65.[8]

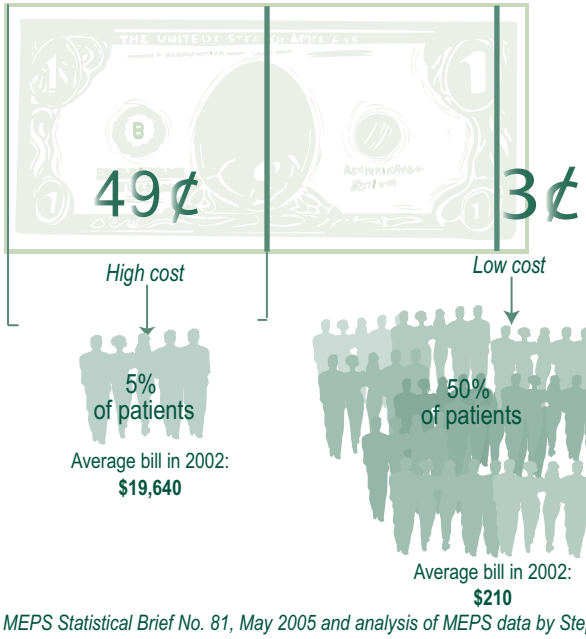
Keep in mind that it's easy to go from being a low-cost patient in one year to a much costlier one the next—a car accident, the sudden onset of an illness, or a hundred other unpredictable events can push anyone into the ranks of the high-cost patients.

Figure 13. Who Are the High-Cost and the Low-Cost Patients in the U.S.?

Distribution of Health-Care Spending on Patients, 2002

Who Are the High-Cost Patients?

- Mostly middle-aged people (average age 57), who are hospitalized for a few days, see doctors several times a year, and spend considerable money (average $3,000) on prescription drugs.
- About 40% are over 65
- They are from all income levels. A third have high incomes (family income over $80,000), and about a fifth are poor (family income under $18,000).
- Only 2% are uninsured. More than two-thirds have private insurance, and nearly a third are covered by government health programs, the most common being Medicare.
- They pay about 12% (average $2,400) of their bills out-of-pocket.



Who Are the Low-Cost Patients?

- Mostly young (average age 28), healthy people, who are likely to see a doctor and a dentist once a year and spend little (average $44) for prescription drugs.
- About 3% are over 65
- They are from all income levels, with almost the same breakdown as among high spenders: nearly a third have high incomes and about a fifth are poor.
- Nearly 20% are uninsured. About 17% are covered by government programs, most commonly Medicaid. The majority have private insurance.
- They pay about 40% (average $84) of their bills out-of-pocket.

Sources: *MEPS Statistical Brief No. 81, May 2005 and analysis of MEPS data by Stephanie Martin of ISER*

Do We Use More Medical Care?

Americans spend more on health care than anybody else. Do Americans increase health-care costs by getting more medical care than people in other developed countries? Or conversely, do countries with national health-care systems hold down costs by rationing care?

Figure 14 compares Americans with the British, Canadians, New Zealanders, and Australians on use of, access to, and satisfaction with their health-care systems. The comparison countries all have some form of national health-care system.

Overall, the comparisons show that residents of all four countries are almost equally likely to see doctors and have diagnostic tests, and that Americans are slightly more likely to take prescription drugs.

Americans are, however, more likely to skip medical tests because of cost and less likely to get appointments the same day they call. They also seem to be somewhat less satisfied with care they get from their doctors and in the emergency room.

Figure 14. Use of Medical Care, U.S. and Selected Countries, 2004
(Percent of Survey Respondents)

	U.S.	Great Britain	New Zealand	Canada	Australia
Saw at least one doctor in previous 2 years	**97%**	95%	97%	95%	98%
Regularly take prescription drugs	**46%**	44%	39%	43%	39%
Had blood tests, x-rays, or other diagnostic tests in past 2 years	**84%**	71%	82%	84%	83%
Able to get doctor's appointment same day when sick	**33%**	41%	60%	27%	54%
Skipped medical tests, treatment or follow-up because of cost	**27%**	2%	20%	8%	18%
Rate regular doctor's care excellent or very good	**61%**	64%	74%	68%	71%
Among those who used emergency room, share who rate emergency services fair or poor	**34%**	23%	27%	27%	23%

Source: Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey, 2004

Are We Healthier?

Another important aspect of the health-care story is what we're getting in return for the high spending. Are Alaskans healthier than in 1990?

The answer seems mixed. In 2005 the United Health Foundation ranked Alaska as among the most improved states in health outcomes since 1990. Despite that improvement, the foundation still ranks Alaska somewhere in the mid-range of states on health measures—because 15 years ago Alaska was ranked toward the bottom.[9] Figure 15 illustrates some of the improvements Alaska has made since 1990.

Rates of infectious disease (which include hepatitis, tuberculosis, and many more) went from far above the U.S. average in 1990 to significantly below by 2005. Infant mortality dropped in Alaska and throughout the country.

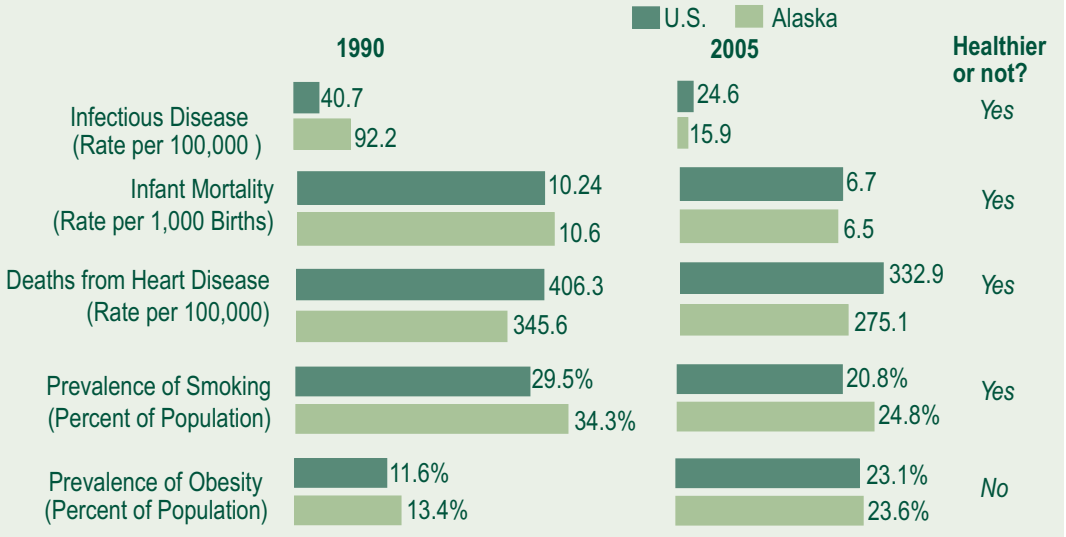
Declines in infectious disease and infant deaths in Alaska can be traced partly to public-health spending for immunizations, as well as for safe water and sewer systems, new housing, and better access to medical care in remote villages.[10] In Alaska and nationwide, advances in treatment and technology have also reduced infant deaths.

With improved treatments for heart disease, the rate of death from heart disease declined by 20% in Alaska since 1990, dropping slightly faster than the national rate.

Rates of smoking among Alaskans fell also, but Alaskans are still more likely to smoke than other Americans. Again, public-health campaigns to fight smoking likely contributed to the decline.

On the down side, Alaskans and other Americans are far more likely to be obese now than in 1990—and obese people are more likely to require treatment for diabetes and high blood pressure.

Figure 15. Are Alaskans Healthier Now Than in 1990?



Source: United Health Foundation, *America's Health Rankings 2005*

Alaska and U.S. Costs

Years ago, everything cost more in Alaska, and costs still remain high in remote areas. But in Anchorage and other urban places, the historically high costs of many things have moved closer to U.S. averages in recent times, as the population grew, local markets got bigger, and infrastructure and transportation improved.

But costs of medical care haven't declined relative to U.S. averages. Overall medical costs are probably somewhere in the range of 25% higher in Alaska, but that cost difference varies quite a bit among services and procedures, and prices don't always reflect cost.

Alaska has fewer practicing doctors per capita than the nation as a whole, but about twice as many dentists—so how the supply of medical professionals may affect costs is not clear (Figure 16).

Figures 17 through 20 show some examples of cost differences, but it isn't a comprehensive picture.

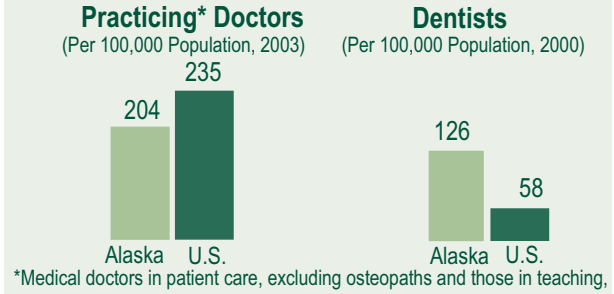
• Overall costs of medical and surgical procedures in Alaska were about 18% above the U.S. average in 2001 and dental procedures 37% more (Figure 17).

• Average costs of a visit to a doctor's office were 30% higher in Alaska in 2001. But the average is a mix of private insurance and government payments. A private insurer in Anchorage and Fairbanks paid nearly twice as much as Medicare for an office visit in 2001, as Figure 18 shows.

• Alaskans don't use as many prescription drugs as other Americans—mostly because there are fewer Alaskans over 65—but we pay more. In 2003, the average price of retail prescriptions was 25% higher in Alaska.

• Costs of hospital care went up faster in Alaska than nationwide from 2000 to 2003—so in 2003 average expenses for a day in an Alaska hospital were 42% above the U.S. average, compared with 30% in 2000.

Figure 16. How Do Numbers of Alaska Doctors and Dentists Compare with U.S. Average?



*Medical doctors in patient care, excluding osteopaths and those in teaching, research, and administration. Includes doctors working for federal agencies.

Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, Health United States, 2005; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Alaska Workforce Profile, 2000

Figure 17. How Much Higher are Medical Costs in Alaska?

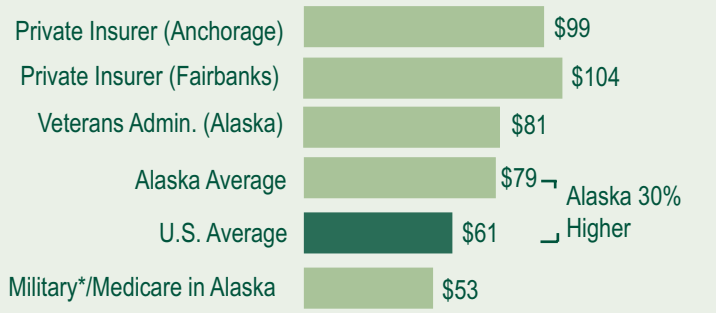
(Costs Paid by Private Insurer, 2000)

	Percent Above U.S. Average
Medical/Surgical Procedures	18.1%
Dental Procedures	37.7%

Source: Ingenix data base; cited in Alaska Division of Medical Assistance, HealthCare Cost Analysis, 2001

Figure 18. Costs of An Office Visit, Alaska and U.S., 2001

(Established Patient, 15 minutes)



*Insurance coverage for active-duty and retired military personnel for medical care not available from military facilities.

Source: GAO Report GAO-01-620, May 2001

Figure 19. Prescription Use and Cost, Alaska and U.S., 2003

	Prescriptions Per Capita	Average Price of Retail Prescriptions	Average Cost Per Capita
United States	10.7	$52.97	$566.78
Alaska	6.3	$66.89	$421.41

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, based on data from Verispan, LL.C.: Special Data Request, 2004; and U.S. Census Bureau, State Population Datasets for six Race Groups

Figure 20. Hospital Costs, Alaska and U.S. , 2000 and 2003

(Expenses per In-Patient Day)

Source: 2003 American Hospital Association, Annual Survey

Figure 21. What's Driving Health-Care Spending In Alaska?

*Authors' estimate

What's Driving Costs? It's a Puzzle

Spending for health care in Alaska increased an average of nearly 9% a year from 1990 to 2005—and that figure doesn't reflect the big capital costs for building hospitals and clinics in the state since 1990.

More people and general inflation together account for only about 40% of that growth. So what's driving the rest?

Just about everybody has an opinion about what's pushing up medical costs, here and nationwide. Alaska has some special conditions—mostly small markets and high costs in rural areas—but other possible contributors to high costs are common to Alaska and the rest of the country.

Some people think the big factors have to do with our system of delivering health care. Those include market forces—like lack of competition, for instance, and lack of incentives in many parts of the system to control costs—as well as inefficiencies created by the complexity of the U.S. system.

Other arguments related to the delivery system are that Americans get more medical care than they need, because most of the bills are still paid by health insurance. Others believe, by contrast, that costs of caring for uninsured people are responsible.

Others blame environmental factors, especially Americans eating too much and not exercising—leading to the spread of diabetes and other conditions requiring more care.

Still others say the growth has to do with changes in treatments and technology—treating conditions at lower thresholds (like the recent drop in the cholesterol level at which doctors recommend treatment); more effective but costlier treatments and prescription drugs; and more complex technology.

Other arguments have to do with changing demographics and a shift in the kinds of illnesses treated. Americans are getting older, and older people need more medical care. Also, some point out that decades ago, more of the illnesses treated were acute—like influenza—and the patient either got better or died in a fairly short time. Now, chronic illnesses and conditions—like high blood pressure—are common and require long-term treatment.

And many Americans link high costs to behavior of drug companies, the insurance industry, the medical and legal professions, and individual Americans. Such behavior would include, for instance, insurance and drug companies making high profits; doctors overbilling government programs; and patients filing lawsuits—causing doctors to practice "defensive medicine."

Probably there are other opinions we haven't discussed here. We're not endorsing any of them, but merely pointing out that many things could be contributing to rising costs—and it's a puzzle how all the pieces fit together. We will learn more as we study Alaska's health-care system. But for now, we want to emphasize that the answer to what is driving health-care costs is not simple, and finding solutions won't be simple either.

Endnotes

1. Our estimates are based on the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' definitions of personal health care spending. See http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalHealthExpendData/01_Overview.asp#TopOfPage. We have also included insurance costs, to capture the expenses paid by employers and employees.

2. ISER *Research Summary* No. 53, "The Cost of Health Care in Alaska," December 1992.

3. The decline in state share is expected to ameliorate somewhat beginning in FY 2006, due to a decision by the 9th District Appellate Court to disallow the Fair Share program that enabled tribal hospitals to receive a higher reimbursement than non-tribal hospitals for uncompensated care.

4. U.S. Census Bureau figures from the Current Population Survey classify Alaskans with coverage only through the Indian Health Service as "uninsured." We have adjusted those figures, separating those with IHS-only coverage from the uninsured. The adjustment is based on methods of the University of Minnesota's School of Medicine, State Health Access Data Center.

5. Figures from the American Academy of Pediatrics for uninsured Alaska children are adjusted U.S. Census figures, separating children with IHS-coverage only from the "uninsured" category.

6. National Academy of Sciences, *Hidden Costs, Value Lost: Uninsurance in America.* Available at: http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10719.html Public subsidies for uncompensated care are illustrated in the State of Alaska's FY 2007 budget request, which includes $27 million to help Alaska hospitals pay for uncompensated care.

7. In 1999, for example, health-care spending for Americans ages 75 to 84 was seven times higher than for people 18 and under.

8. See note 6.

9. United Health Foundation, *America's Health Rankings*, 2005 edition.

10. See Chapter 3 in ISER report, *Status of Alaska Natives 2004*, May 2005.

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ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

JUNE 2006

The Military is Big Business in Anchorage

WHAT'S INSIDE

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Frank H. Murkowski, Governor
Greg O'Claray, Commissioner

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June 2006
Volume 26
Number 6

ISSN 0160-3345

To contact us for more information, a free subscription, mailing list changes or back copies, email us at trends@labor.state.ak.us or call (907) 465-4500.

Alaska Economic Trends is a monthly publication dealing with a wide variety of economic-related issues in the state. Its purpose is to inform the public about those issues.

Alaska Economic Trends is funded by the Employment Security Division and published by the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

Printed and distributed by Assets, Inc., a vocational training and employment program, at a cost of $1.10 per copy.

Cover: In this U.S. Marine Corps stock photograph, communication and navigation team members Lance Cpl. Nicholas D. Meyer, Lance Cpl. Kimberly S. Johnson and Cpl. Reynaldo Salgado perform safety checks on an F/A-18C Hornet in June 2005. Johnson grew up in Anchorage; Meyer is from Boise, Idaho, and Salgado is from Chicago. Photo by Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke, U.S. Marine Corps

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Serving Those Who Protect and Serve Our Country

By Governor Frank H. Murkowski

The military is big business in Alaska. This month's Trends feature article focuses on its historical impact on Anchorage's development as well as its ongoing importance to the city's economy.

The military is Anchorage's single largest employer and a billion-dollar enterprise for the city. Its influence extends beyond uniformed military, with an estimated $115 million payroll in 2004 for federal civilian employment on Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base in addition to the more than $500 million paid to uniformed personnel. The military accounts for a big chunk of the city's construction activity. It is also a large consumer of goods and services, spending $1.7 billion on procurement for Alaska in 2004. Anchorage has a 66-year history with the military and it is still going strong.

We appreciate the military across Alaska and work hard to protect and serve the people it brings to our state. One interesting demographic impact the military has had on Anchorage is the creation of a large veteran population. In fact, Alaska has the highest per capita concentration of veterans in the nation, with a veteran population in Anchorage of about 30,000, or about 16 percent of the population.

For those ready to leave uniformed service, we provide a wide array of programs and services for veterans. These include, but are not limited to, state employment preference rights, affirmative action plans, job search assistance, land discount/purchase preference and mortgage loans, interest rate preference and low-cost housing.

Helmets to Hardhats is a program providing one-stop shopping for the best construction industry jobs nationwide. H2H accepts applications from active military, those in the National Guard and Reserves and veterans who have a sincere desire to join the building and construction trades. As the construction industry in Alaska continues to grow, fueled additionally by the natural gas pipeline project, there will be ample opportunities for Alaska's veterans to find good-paying jobs.

The Department of Defense shocked Alaskans last year with its recommendation to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) for the realignment of Eielson Air Force Base. With the recommendations, the base would be reduced to a "warm" status and be retained for training exercises. My administration and our federal delegation, along with the residents of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, fought this decision with every tool at our disposal.

Our massive statewide efforts dedicated to persuading the BRAC of Alaska's importance to our nation's military security were successful. The Commission clearly saw our argument that its airspace and training facilities are too valuable and it is impractical to "warm base" such a cold place. While the decision to move the A-10s will have an impact on Fairbanks and North Pole, it is far less than the devastation that could have come with the Air Force's initial recommendation. We also brought the Commission to agreement that a withdrawal from Galena should be slow, easing the impact on the community.

The military is big business in Alaska. But business aside, we are proud of the men and women who serve and protect our country. It is our honor to show our appreciation and support through programs and services to help them and their families live well in our great state.

The Military is Big Business in Anchorage

by Neal Fried and
Brigitta Windisch-Cole
Economists

A long history – 66 years and still going strong

On June 27, 1940, about 18 months before Pearl Harbor was attacked and the United States entered World War II, the first military troops arrived in Anchorage, marking the beginning of a dramatic economic expansion that would last nearly two decades. In the words of Alaska historian Terrence Cole, "Anchorage was a war boom town which never seemed to stop booming."[1] By most accounts, the war put the Alaska Territory on the map and was the most important event in Alaska's history since the gold rush.

With the construction of two major military installations in the early 1940s – the Army's Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base – Anchorage became a company town virtually overnight, and the company was the military. Partly in response to Pearl Harbor and the Japanese occupation of the Aleutian Islands Attu and Kiska, Alaska was the recipient of billions of dollars in defense spending. Thousands of military personnel were sent to Alaska, and workers and contractors rushed to the state to construct military bases and the 1,500-mile Alaska Highway.

After the war ended, there were fears that demobilization would result in a bust for Anchorage's economy. Troop levels did temporarily fall statewide, from a high of 152,000 in 1943 to about 99,000 in 1946, but the Korean War and Cold War pushed them back up to about 138,000 by 1950.

By 1951 the combined investment in Fort Richardson and Elmendorf was $133 million – or $10.2 billion in current dollars – and the military's presence had catapulted the once sleepy railroad town of Anchorage into the state's largest city and the center of commerce, transportation and political power.

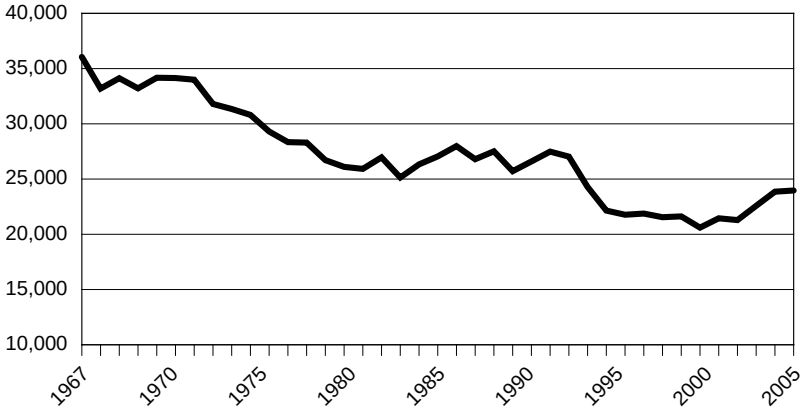
The military's influence declines

Toward the end of the 1960s the relative economic importance of the military began to wane. Although the military's numbers were relatively stable through the early 1970s (see Exhibit 1), economic growth in other areas made Anchorage less dependent on the military's presence. In particular, the 1968 discovery of

[1] Terrence Cole, "Boom Town, Anchorage and the Second World War," Journal of the West (July 1986), 75.

1 Military Population Up Slightly
Downward trend reverses in 2003

Anchorage's military population



Note: Includes active duty military and their dependents

Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Neighborhood Source Book, Municipality of Anchorage

oil in Prudhoe Bay and growth in the international air cargo business, the visitor industry and Anchorage's service sector were key factors in creating a more diverse economy for the city.

By 1980 only 15 percent of Anchorage's population was tied to the military compared to 33 percent in 1967. (See Exhibit 2.) The military's presence was beginning to take a backseat in the city's economic consciousness.

When the Soviet threat began to evaporate in the early 1990s and Cold War tensions eased, Anchorage's military numbers fell as bases around the state were closed and Alaska lost nearly a quarter of its active duty military. Fort Richardson was reorganized and downsized, losing over half of its station strength by 1995. (See Exhibit 3.) Given the numerous base closures throughout the nation, there were growing concerns that the Army would eventually close the base altogether.

The military makes a turnaround

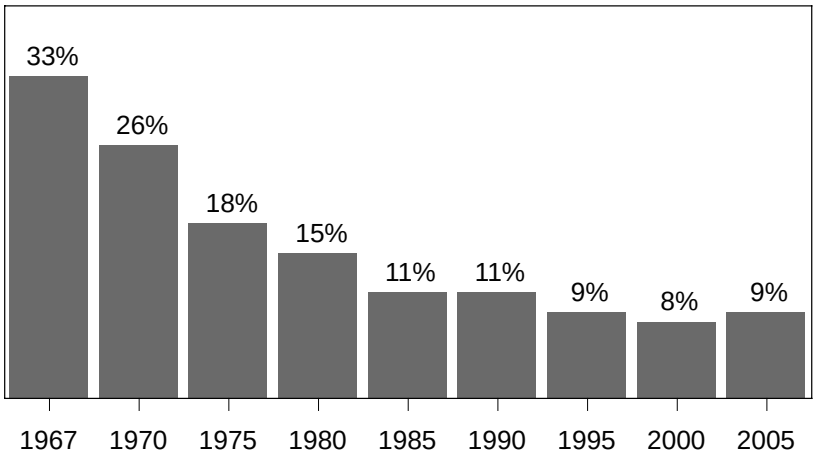
Total troop levels in Anchorage hit rock bottom in 2002. Then in 2003, when national military activity picked up after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks,[2] the trend reversed and the military again became one of the city's more dynamic economic forces. By 2005, the active duty count had reached 10,889 – an increase of nearly 2,400 in just three years. (See Exhibit 4.)

Most of the growth over that period came from Fort Richardson where troop levels nearly doubled, jumping from 2,116 in 2002 to 4,066 in 2005. With the formation of the new Airborne Brigade Combat Team and other additions, Fort Richardson's numbers will continue to grow and are expected to reach 4,500 in 2006. This will represent the largest number of troops stationed at Fort Richardson since 1991. For its part, Elmendorf is not expected to see large troop increases, but the delivery of C-17 cargo planes and a newly minted squadron of F-22 Raptor Interceptors is keeping the base modern and relevant.

[2] Some of the increases in Anchorage troop strength were planned before the Sept. 11 attacks.

A Reduced Population Share 2
But still a significant percentage

Military population as a percentage of Anchorage's total population

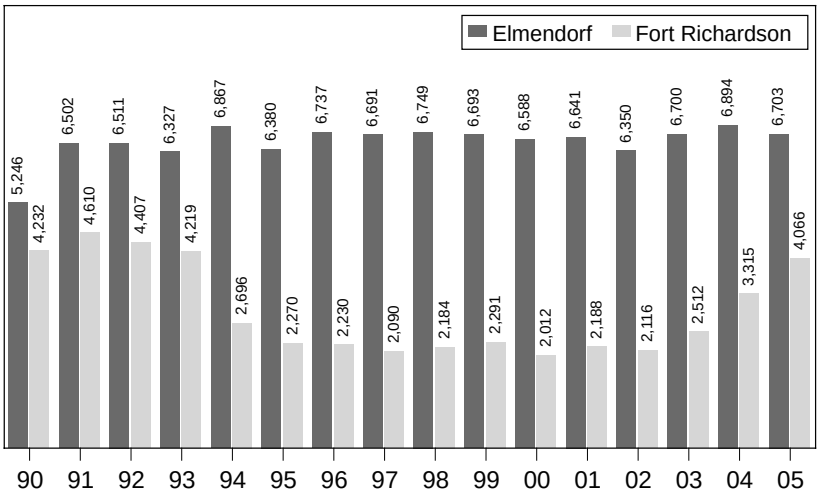


Note: Includes uniformed military and their dependents

Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Neighborhood Source Book, Municipality of Anchorage

Army Numbers More Variable 3
Air Force bigger, more stable

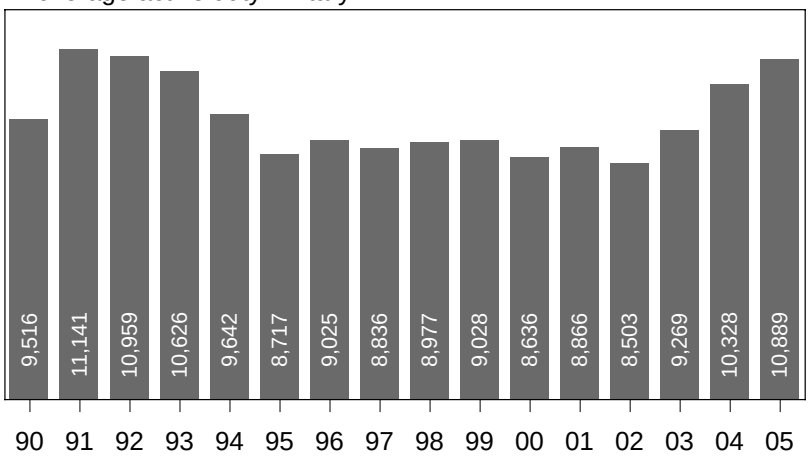
Active duty military on Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson



Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Neighborhood Source Book, Municipality of Anchorage

4 Troop Strength Reaches 13-Year High
Gradual decline from 1991 to 2002

Anchorage active duty military



Note: Includes the small number of Navy, Marine and Coast Guard personnel stationed in Anchorage, in addition to the Army and Air Force

Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

5 The City's Largest Employer
Anchorage's top 10 employers in 2005

		Average Monthly Employment
1	Military in Anchorage[1]	10,900
2	Federal Government[2]	9,500
3	State of Alaska	7,400
4	Anchorage School District	6,500
5	Providence Health System in Alaska	3,700
6	Municipality of Anchorage	3,000
7	University of Alaska-Anchorage	2,300
8	Safeway	1,600
9	Wal-Mart/Sam's Club	1,500
10	Fred Meyer	1,200

[1] Includes the uniformed military only

[2] Includes federal civilians employed by the military

Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Anchorage's largest employer

When considered as a single unit,[3] the military is easily Anchorage's largest employer. (See Exhibit 5.) It also represents a significant slice of the total Anchorage work force when compared to other economic sectors. (See Exhibit 6.)

A billion dollar enterprise

In 2004, the federal government spent $1.2 billion on defense in Anchorage, which amounted to 41 percent of all federal expenditures in the city. (See Exhibit 7.) From 2000 to 2004, defense spending in Anchorage has increased by 39 percent, compared to 29 percent for other federal expenditures.

Troop levels have also been growing faster than other segments of Anchorage's economy. Since 2000, the active duty military has added about 2,250 people, which is a bigger increase than all of the city's employment sectors except construction and health care. (See Exhibit 8.)

Direct defense spending by the federal government and direct increases in troop levels only reveal part of the impact the military has on Anchorage. In recent years, for example, the military has been aggressively contracting work out to private companies in the local economy, creating significant private sector job growth. The Air Force estimates that Elmendorf's indirect impact on the Anchorage economy amounted to $882 million in 2005, an increase of 24 percent over 2004.

Because nearly all of the money to fuel this huge machine comes from taxpayers outside Anchorage and Alaska, it is an injection of new income into the city's economy. In other words, the military is a basic sector,[4] and one of Anchorage's largest.

[3] This includes the Air Force, Army and the sprinkling of Navy, Marines and Coast Guard personnel stationed in Anchorage.

[4] Basic sectors are generally defined as those that export a product or service to customers or users outside the local population, and by doing so import money into a local economy. In the case of the military, the service being exported is national defense.

Payroll is the largest expenditure

The most current data show that the largest defense expenditure in Anchorage is for payroll. Almost half of 2004's $1.2 billion in defense expenditures were for wages and salaries: $506 million went directly to uniformed personnel and $112 million went to civil service employees who support the military. Since nearly all the civilian employees live off base, there is little doubt that these payroll dollars have a direct and dramatic impact on Anchorage's economy. According to Air Force estimates, every Air Force related civilian job creates nearly half a job elsewhere in the local labor market.

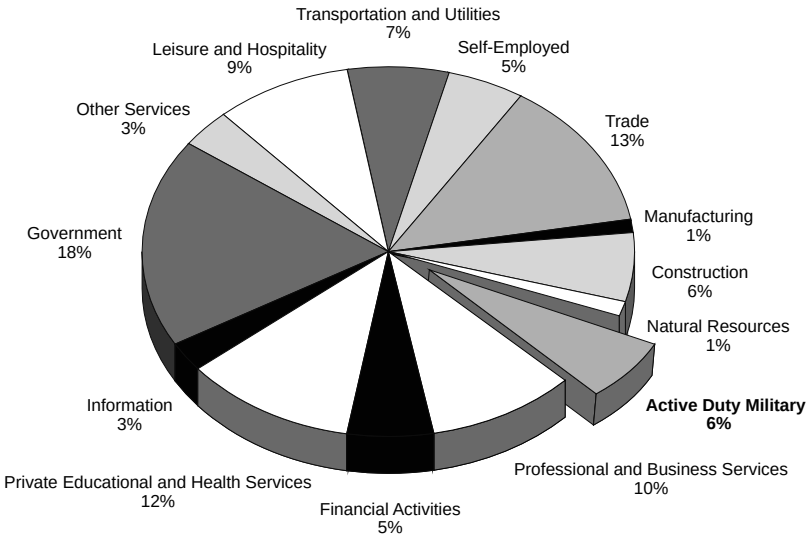
Influence extends beyond the uniformed military

In addition to the nearly 11,000 uniformed troops stationed in Anchorage, data collected by the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development show that federal civilian employment on Fort Richardson and Elmendorf averaged 2,600 jobs in 2004. Payroll for these jobs in 2004 was $115 million, which includes the $112 million mentioned above as well as about $3 million in wages and salaries paid from self-supporting entities such as health clubs and entertainment providers that charge user fees. Many of the jobs in the latter category are seasonal or part-time, which partly explains their relatively low annual pay of $16,184 in 2004.

The jobs funded more directly by defense spending fall into two categories: those paid for by appropriated funds and those paid for by non-appropriated funds. The difference lies in the process by which the positions are authorized. Congress specifically approves a budget for the Army Corps of Engineers, for example, so most of its personnel are paid out of appropriated funds. Other positions paid for out of appropriated funds include power plant operators and other direct troop support service providers considered essential.

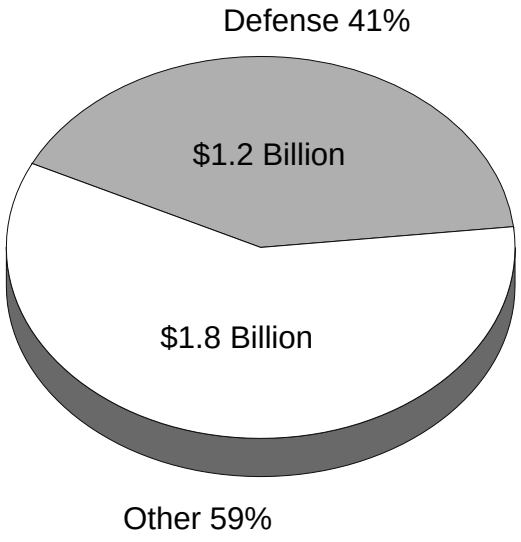
Average annual pay for these types of jobs was $63,189 in 2004. Within this group, wage-

A Healthy Slice of the Work Force 6
Anchorage employment, 2005



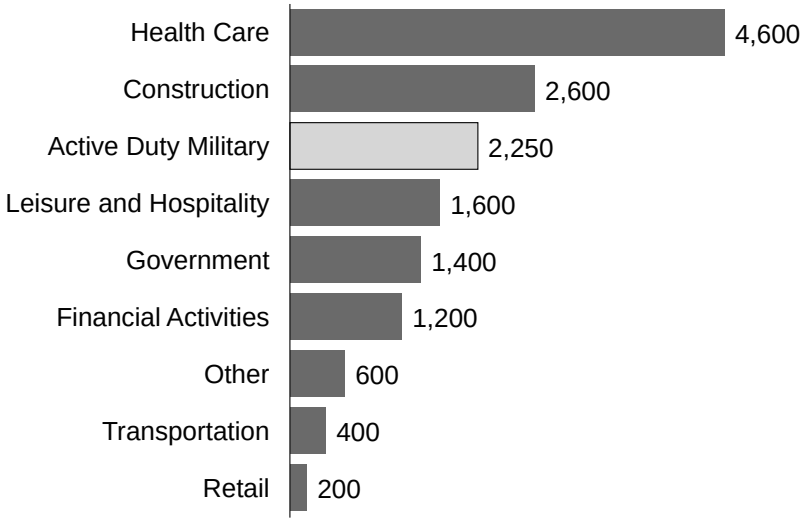
Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

A Large Share of Federal Spending 7
Federal expenditures in Anchorage, 2004



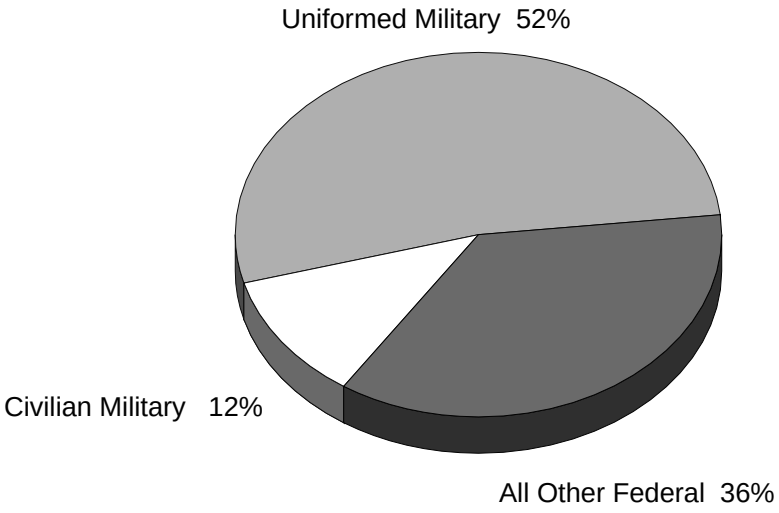
Source: Consolidated Federal Funds Report, Bureau of the Census, 2004

8 Growth Outpacing Most Sectors
Anchorage job growth from 2000 to 2005



Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

9 Defense Wages Dominate
Anchorage federal payroll, 2004



Source: Consolidated Federal Funds Report, Bureau of the Census, 2004

grade employees, or the military's blue-collar work force, receive extra location pay according to the military's schedule, and general schedule employees receive a 25 percent cost-of-living adjustment.[5]

Commissaries, the on-base grocery stores, also provide jobs from appropriated funds. The commissaries operate on a "cost-plus" basis, meaning that authorized patrons – active military or retirees and their dependents – purchase groceries at cost plus a five percent surcharge. The surcharge covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing the existing ones. In 2004, the approximately 130 commissary-related jobs on Anchorage military installations paid an average of $35,601.

Positions paid for by non-appropriated funds include those with less essential supporting roles and those providing entertainment and amenities. Funding comes primarily from operational revenues and a majority of the positions are filled by military dependents.

Private sector contractors also benefit

The military's influence also spreads to the broader Anchorage economy in the form of private contractors that maintain permanent worksites on Elmendorf and Fort Richardson. In 2004, the 21 private sector employers with a presence on Fort Richardson provided a combined monthly average of 250 jobs and paid more than $10.5 million in wages and salaries to their employees who worked there. At Elmendorf, 50 private-sector employers provided an average total of 600 jobs on the base and had a payroll of more than $34 million.

The employers range from large national-defense contractors providing highly specialized technical services to smaller local businesses providing everything from banking services to haircuts and maintenance. Average pay for the combined 850 private-sector jobs on Fort Richardson and Elmendorf was $52,045 in 2004.

[5] The across-the-board 25 percent cost-of-living adjustment is being phased out slowly and being replaced by more localized cost-of-living adjustments.

A closer look at payroll numbers

As noted above, the biggest military expenditure is for payroll – more than $600 million in 2004. Not surprisingly, military payroll expenditures also make up the lion's share of the total federal payroll for Anchorage. When combined, the payrolls of the uniformed military and military civilian employees make up 64 percent of all wages paid by the federal government in Anchorage. (See Exhibit 9.)

The impact uniformed military wages have on the city's economy is hard to determine with any specificity. One factor that can lessen the impact is the large amount of goods and services available on base. Wages spent on base for housing, health care, entertainment, food and consumer goods, for example, inject very little money into the broader Anchorage economy.

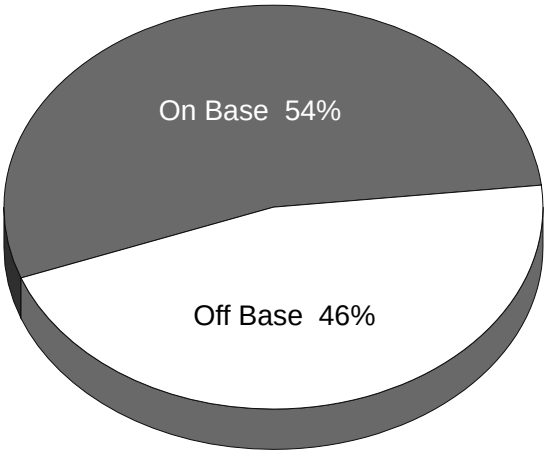
To the extent military personnel live off base – 46 percent of the total in 2004 – their wages are much more likely to be spent off base. (See Exhibit 10.) But given the tremendous expansion of the retail and other service-providing sectors of the city's economy in recent years, it would not be surprising if a large slice of all military paychecks are ending up in local merchants' and service-providers' pockets.

Air Force personnel stationed at Elmendorf are significantly more likely to live off base than the soldiers at Fort Richardson. (See Exhibit 11.) According to the military, personnel who live off base tend to be older and have more children. Having more dependents creates a larger impact on the local economy, both in terms of the amount of goods and services consumed and the increased likelihood of having a spouse who enters the local labor force. Overall, the Air Force estimates that it takes about three active duty positions to generate a job in the private sector.

Military pay can add up

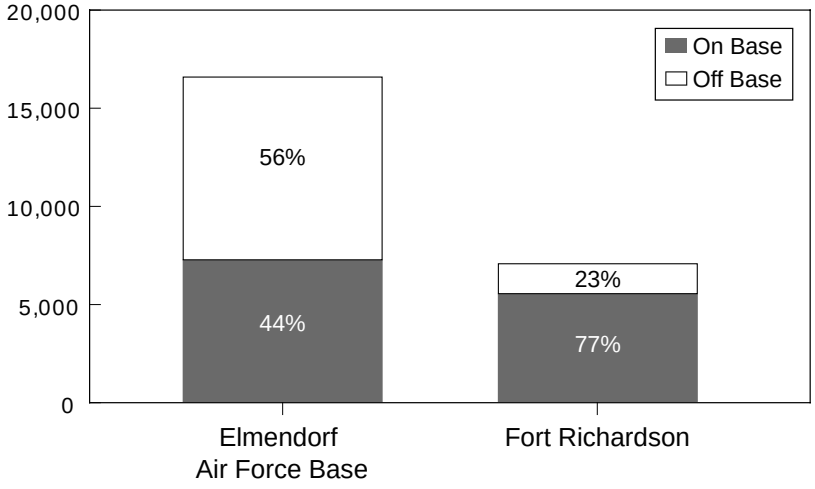
Since the military was professionalized during the Vietnam era, the pay and benefits of uniformed personnel have increased steadily. Members of the military also receive a significant

Nearly Half Live Off Base **10**
Anchorage military housing, 2004



Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Larger Share of Air Force Lives Off Base **11**
Anchorage military housing, 2004



Note: Includes active duty military and their dependents

Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

12 Rank and Seniority Determine Pay
Military pay schedules, 2006

Enlisted Basic Pay Rates

Rank (Air Force/Army)	Pay Grade	Monthly Pay Range
Airman/Private	E-1	$1,273
Airman/Private	E-2	$1,427
Airman First Class/Private First Class	E-3	$1,501 - $1,692
Sr. Airman/Specialist/Corporal	E-4	$1,662 - $2,018
Staff Sergeant/Sergeant	E-5	$1,814 - $2,526
Tech. Sergeant/Staff Sergeant	E-6	$1,979 - $2,998
Master Sgt./Sgt. First Class	E-7	$2,288 - $4,113
Sr. Master Sgt./First/Master Sgt.	E-8	$3,292 - $4,603
Chf. Master Sgt./Command Sgt. Major	E-9	$4,022 - $5,394

Officer Basic Pay Rates

Rank	Pay Grade	Monthly Pay Range
Second Lieutenant	O-1	$2,416 - $3,039
First Lieutenant	O-2	$2,783 - $3,852
Captain	O-3	$3,221 - $5,240
Major	O-4	$3,663 - $6,117
Lieutenant Colonel	O-5	$4,246 - $7,214
Colonel	O-6	$5,094 - $8,841
Brig. General	O-7	$6,872 - $10,066
Major General	O-8	$8,271 - $11,348
Lieutenant General	O-9	$11,689 - $12,525
General	O-10	$13,365 - $14,196

Officer Basic Pay Rates, Special[1]

Rank	Pay Grade	Monthly Pay Range
First Lieutenant	O-1E	$3,039 - $3,774
Second Lieutenant	O-2E	$3,774 - $4,460
Captain	O-3E	$4,297 - $5,592

Warrant Officer Basic Pay Rates

Rank[2]	Pay Grade	Monthly Pay Range
Warrant Officer	WO-1	$2,361 - $3,773
Chief Warrant Officer 2	WO-2	$2,673 - $4,379
Chief Warrant Officer 3	WO-3	$3,039 - $5,032
Chief Warrant Officer 4	WO-4	$3,328 - $5,811
Chief Warrant Officer 5	WO-5	$5,720 - $6,311

[1] For officers with at least four years enlisted experience
[2] All branches of the military except Air Force

Source: Military Advantage (www.military.com)

boost from cost-of-living adjustments, re-enlistment bonuses, housing allowances, combat pay, flight pay and other cash benefits.

Some of these add-ons can be significant. For example, the cost-of-living adjustment for uniformed personnel in Anchorage, which is tied to rank and years of service, averages about $300 a month, one of the highest cost-of-living adjustments in the country. What's more, this extra income is tax-free. Housing allowances for families with dependents range from $1,256 a month to $2,264 a month. Other pay supplements include a monthly food allowance and an annual clothing allowance.

Air Force data show that when all of these payments are added up, the average annual pay for its Elmendorf personnel in 2004 was $62,054. The Army does not publish similar figures, but its average pay would be lower because the soldiers in Anchorage tend to be considerably younger, have fewer dependents and have less seniority than Air Force personnel stationed at Elmendorf.

Pay is based on rank and experience

All military pay calculations start with basic pay schedules, which apply to all active duty personnel in the nation. (See Exhibit 12.) Rank and time of service are the main drivers of salary progression. Although the titles or ranks may differ among the military branches, they use the same pay-grade schedule. Enlisted personnel start with a pay grade of E-1, with a rank of either private in the Army or airman in the Air Force, and make $1,273 a month. This is the wage paid to most enlisted personnel as soon as they finish boot camp.

The highest enlisted pay grade is E-9, which applies to command sergeant majors in the Army and chief master sergeants in the Air Force. The most common rank at Elmendorf is senior airman at a pay grade of E-4 and the most common rank at Fort Richardson is specialist, also at a pay grade of E-4. The basic pay schedules do not include any cost-of-living adjustments.

Officers' ranks are the same for both the Army and the Air Force and new officers usually

enter the military as second lieutenants with a pay grade of O-1. Basic pay at this level starts at $2,416. The highest pay grade among the officers stationed in Anchorage is O-9 for the rank of lieutenant general. The most common rank among both Army and Air Force officers is captain (O-3) with about six years of service.

The National Guard's supporting role

National Guard troops, the reserve force of the military, have played an increasingly important role in U.S. military activities in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past few years and add to the military's presence in Anchorage. The city's contingent of Army National Guard, which includes an infantry and an aviation battalion, is made up of about 600 soldiers and is headquartered at Fort Richardson. About 1,300 Air National Guard members are stationed at Kulis Air National Guard Base, near Ted Stevens International Airport, but they will be moved to Elmendorf Air Force Base in the near future as part of the recent Base Realignment and Closure directives.

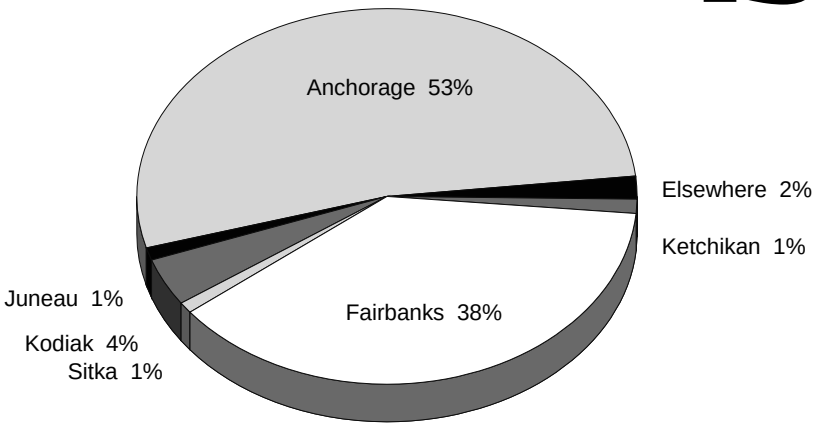
National Guard members fall into two groups. The core group is the permanent, full-time uniformed contingent whose ranks and pay grades are the same as those for the Air Force or Army. (See Exhibit 12.) Benefits and pay supplements are also similar. About 20 percent of the Army National Guard stationed at Fort Richardson and about 40 percent of the Air National Guard at Kulis is full time.

The larger portion of the National Guard consists of non-mobilized members. Usually these members are called out once a month for weekend drills and once a year for 15 consecutive days of training. As in other military branches, pay depends on rank and years of service, but it is also based on the number of drills – usually 48 a year – and time committed to the annual training period.

The part-time status allows Guard members to hold jobs in addition to their service commitment. Annual base pay for this non-mobilized contingent ranges from $2,400 to $10,987 for enlisted personnel and from $4,922 to $28,916 for officers. If Guard members are called for active duty, their pay schedules match the pay grades of other uniformed military personnel in either the Army or Air Force. As a side note, women make up about 25 percent of Alaska's Air National Guard, the highest rate of female participation in the nation.

Half of State's Military in Anchorage 13

Active duty military by area, 2004



Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

National Guard expenditures provide an additional economic benefit

Although detailed geographic breakouts of Alaska's Army and Air National Guard units' spending are not available, Anchorage undoubtedly receives much of the economic benefit since the Guards' largest bases are located in the city. The U.S. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs reported that National Guard spent $158.3 million in Alaska in 2005. The Alaska Department of Military and Veteran Affairs supplemented the Army and Air Guards' budgets with $15.9 million, $11.3 million of which came from federal funds.

Military construction just keeps getting bigger

Anchorage's construction industry has always been a big beneficiary of military capital spending and currently the military's capital budgets are especially large. Because the construction takes place behind secured gates – military installations are generally off-limits to the public – most Anchorage residents have not seen the physical transformation that has

14 Contracts of at least $2 million
Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson, 2005

Company	Contract Amount
Alutiiq Manufacturing Contract	$50,708,102
Watterson Construction	$35,964,000
Crowley Marine Services	$33,553,374
Arctec Alaska JV	$33,369,064
Kiewit Construction	$29,177,000
Chugach Management Services	$16,674,306
Chugach Support Services	$14,805,526
Graybar Electric	$14,266,449
Alaska Structures	$13,251,716
KUK/BRS Alaska Venture	$12,825,119
Manson Construction	$11,005,861
TKC Communications	$11,002,407
Rivada Pacific	$9,817,364
Weldin Construction	$9,429,503
Aurora Power Resources	$9,266,000
Rim Architects	$8,750,906
Mckesson Corporation	$8,511,389
Chugach Eareckson Support Services	$7,892,550
Davis Watterson	$7,872,887
Anteon Corporation	$7,732,991
Phoenix Air Group	$7,412,579
Alascom	$6,850,340
Di Tomaso	$6,810,975
Phoenix Management	$6,099,823
Chenega Operations Services	$5,839,364
Chenega Technology Services	$5,839,364
Tfab Manufacturing	$5,646,568
Emerald Consulting Group	$5,645,733
Frawner Corp.	$5,562,345
Lynden Air Cargo	$5,484,610
Evergreen Helicopters	$5,456,500
Alaska Native Technologies	$4,420,940
Harbor Enterprises	$4,395,808
White Mountain Construction	$4,257,341
Chenega Power	$4,203,993
Wilder Construction	$3,750,000
Olgoonik Logistics	$3,600,228
Agviq LLC	$3,482,677
Chugach McKinley	$3,371,648
Chenega Management	$3,340,110
Weston Solutions	$3,094,878
ITT Industries	$2,778,475
Delta Western	$2,761,257
BSA/LB&B JV	$2,747,916
Tfab Warner Robins	$2,602,455
ASRC Constructors	$2,482,199
Ameresco Solutions	$2,431,900
Nakuuruq Solutions	$2,357,012
Northern Air Cargo	$2,352,570
Qub'd International	$2,300,246
Inlet Petroleum	$2,148,117
Inuit-Kaya Technical Services	$2,117,000
CYS Management Services	$2,036,040

Source: U.S. Department of Defense

taken place at Fort Richardson and Elmendorf over the past five years.

Thousands of new housing units have been built or reconstructed, many of them privately owned and then leased back to the military. As an example, Anchorage contractor JL Properties built 420 housing units on Elmendorf in 2001 and took over management of an additional 407. This same contractor is currently building 762 additional units, valued at $227 million and, when all is done, will own or manage 2,022 family units on Elmendorf.

Other construction and renovation projects include hangars, gyms, office buildings, firing ranges, runways, roads, clinics and railroad tracts. The federal fiscal year 2006 budget includes $43 million for family housing, $25 million to $50 million for barracks, and $5 million to $10 million for an ammunition supply point on Fort Richardson. At Elmendorf, the biggest single budget item is a corrosion control facility that is budgeted at $25 million to $50 million.

A total of $193 million was allocated to construction on Fort Richardson and Elmendorf in 2005. To illustrate the significance of this number, total permitted construction activity by the city in 2005 was $661 million. According to the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska, 11 percent of all construction activity in the state in 2006 will be tied to the military. In addition, the military construction jobs pay particularly well since they are covered by the federal Davis-Bacon Act, which requires that workers be paid prevailing wages on all publicly funded projects.

A large consumer of goods and services

According to the Department of Defense, the military spent $1.7 billion on procurement for Alaska in 2004. Detailed information was not available on how much of this amount went to Alaska or Anchorage suppliers, but as headquarters to the state's commercial activity and over half the state's active duty military (see Exhibit 13), one would expect that Anchorage receives a substantial benefit from the military's procurement spending.

The military is also an important customer for Anchorage's service providers. During the past decade it has been aggressive in contracting out duties that historically were done in-house, which has led to an impressive number of local contractors that received at least $2 million from the military in 2005. (See Exhibit 14.) Prominent on this list are many of Alaska's Native corporations and construction contractors.

The military's impact on state demographics

Active duty military personnel and their dependents represented 9 percent of Anchorage's population in 2005, substantially less than in the military's peak years, but still enough to exert a strong demographic influence. Data from the 2000 U.S. Census show that the Elmendorf and Fort Richardson on-base populations – military and their dependents – are significantly younger than Anchorage's population. Fort Richardson's median age was just 21.8 and Elmendorf's 22.8, compared to 32.4 for the city as a whole. (See Exhibit 15.)

Military dependents made up 9.1 percent of the Anchorage School District's enrollment in 2005. (See Exhibit 16.) If data were available for the off-base military dependents, the percentage would be higher. These students create a substantial financial contribution to local schools since the military contributes a specific amount to the school district for each on-base military dependent. The military paid a total of about $13 million to the district in the 2005-2006 school year.

More women are active members of the military than ever before but the ratio of males to females is still considerably higher than in Anchorage's population as a whole. Historically, the military has contributed to Anchorage's racial and ethnic diversity, but in some respects Anchorage's civilian population is more diverse than the military's.

The military is also a major contributor to the transient nature of Anchorage's population. When asked, "Where did you live five years ago?" during the 2000 Census, over 80

Military Has Unique Demographics 15
Select demographic statistics, 2000

	Elmendorf Air Force Base[1]	Fort Richardson[1]	Anchorage
Population			
Male	58.5%	54.3%	50.6%
Female	41.5%	45.7%	49.4%
Age			
19 and under	38.3%	42.8%	32.0%
20-44	59.1%	55.6%	40.7%
45-64	2.4%	1.6%	21.9%
65 and over	0.2%	0.2%	5.5%
Median age	22.8	21.8	32.4
Race/Ethnicity			
White	68.3%	77.2%	72.2%
African American	20.2%	12.3%	5.8%
Alaska Native/Native American	0.8%	0.7%	7.3%
Asian	1.7%	2.8%	5.5%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.3%	0.9%
Other race	4.0%	2.6%	2.2%
Multi-race	4.6%	4.1%	6.0%
Hispanic	9.2%	7.2%	5.7%
Place of Birth			
Not In Alaska	90.3%	88.9%	67.9%
Place of Residence Five Years Ago			
Outside Alaska	87.8%	81.4%	26.2%
Households			
Average household size	3.4	3.7	2.7
Average family size	3.5	3.7	3.2
Education			
High school or higher	98.4%	99.4%	90.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher	17.3%	20.2%	28.9%
Income and Poverty			
Median household income	$36,632	$41,161	$55,546
Median family income	$36,563	$40,089	$63,682
Per capita income	$13,935	$13,194	$25,287
Percentage living below poverty	6.2%	3.5%	7.3%

[1] On-base population only

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

percent of the on-base military population answered that they had lived somewhere outside Alaska. For Anchorage, the number was dramatically lower at about 26 percent. The mobility of military personnel and their families accentuates the frontier flavor of Alaska's demographics, as does the military's high percentage of males.

The military's legacy is a large veteran population

Another demographic impact the military has had on Anchorage is in the creation of a large veteran population. In fact, Alaska has the highest per capita concentration of veterans in the nation. At last count, Anchorage had a veteran population of roughly 30,000, or 16 percent of the adult population.

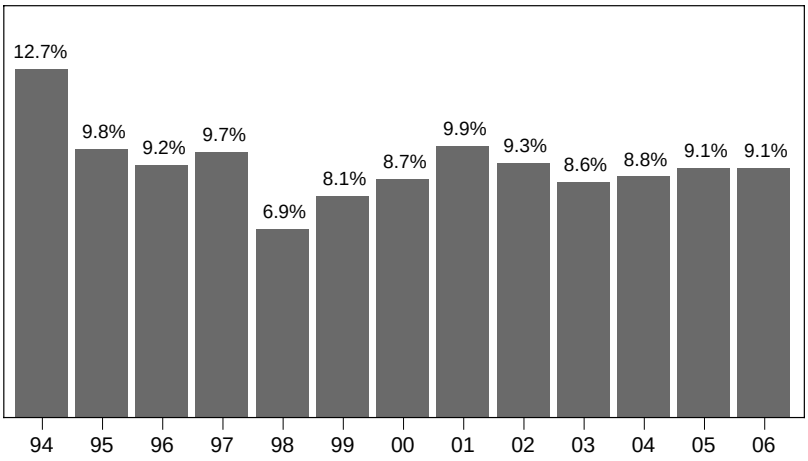
According to the Department of Defense, there were also 4,981 military retirees living in Anchorage in federal fiscal year 2004. Each year these retirees are paid about $84 million in direct benefits, not including health care and other retirement benefits that flow into Anchorage's economy.

An unpredictable future for Anchorage's military

With the nation's military preoccupied with war, it is hard to forecast its future in Alaska. In times of international conflict, military missions and priorities are subject to significant change and what that might mean for Alaska is anybody's guess. Still, the military has a few very good reasons to maintain a presence in the state. Alaska's proximity to Asia and in particular the world's rising power, China, makes it strategically important and the state's vast and largely unpopulated expanse provides the military with unique training opportunities. In all likelihood, the military will remain a major force in Anchorage's economy for years to come.

16 Military Dependents in the Schools
Share of the school population, 1994-2006

Military dependents as a percentage of Anchorage School District students



Note: Dependents of on-base military only

Source: Anchorage School District

Employment Scene

By Dan Robinson
Economist

Job growth continues

Total nonfarm employment rose by 4,900 in April to 305,400. (See Exhibit 1.) Leading the way were seasonal industries such as construction, which added 1,600 jobs in April, and retail trade, which added 900. Leisure and hospitality was also a significant contributor, with 400 new jobs in the accommodations industry and 700 in the food services and drinking places category.

April's job count was 4,400 higher than in April 2005, an over-the-year growth rate of 1.5 percent. The year-ago comparisons show job growth in most employment categories.

The oil and gas industry provided 1,100 more jobs in April than it did a year earlier. The industry's growth rate over that period was an impressive 13 percent. Other industries showing strong over-the-year growth include retail trade and health care.

The Anchorage/Mat-Su region provided the largest portion of the over-the-year increase, about 3,000 jobs, but the Northern Region grew at the fastest rate, a strong 5.1 percent. (See Exhibit 3.) The Interior and Southeast regions added about 400 and 350 jobs, respectively, while the Southwest (-350) and Gulf Coast (-100) regions had fewer jobs than in April 2005.

Unemployment rate down slightly

The state's unemployment rate fell two-tenths of a percentage point in April to 7.5 percent. The decline was less than usual for April, though not by a significant amount. In 2005, the unemployment rate fell four-tenths of a percentage point from March to April; in April 2004 it fell nine-tenths of a percentage point.

April's 7.5 percent rate is four-tenths of a percentage point higher than April 2005's rate, suggesting that the labor market might be softening slightly after almost three years of gradually declining unemployment rates.

April numbers can be misleading, however, since it is the last month before the beginning of Alaska's summer visitor season and the timing of employers' preparations can vary from year to year. The April job count for construction, an industry also characterized by strong summer hiring, can also fluctuate significantly from year to year depending on the weather. The most telling comparisons will come during the coming peak months of July and August.

Anchorage's unemployment was unchanged at 5.9 percent in April, while Fairbanks and Juneau saw moderate declines of three-tenths and four-tenths of a percentage point, respectively. Juneau's 5.3 percent unemployment rate was the lowest in the state for April. The Wade Hampton Census Area, which is located between Nome and Bethel, had the highest rate at 23.8 percent.

1 Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment

Alaska	Preliminary 04/06	Revised 03/06	Revised 04/05	Changes from: 03/06	Changes from: 04/05
Total Nonfarm Wage and Salary[1]	305,400	300,500	301,000	4,900	4,400
Goods-Producing[2]	38,800	38,900	37,500	-100	1,300
Service-Providing[3]	266,600	261,600	263,500	5,000	3,100
Natural Resources and Mining	11,700	11,700	10,400	0	1,300
Logging	500	400	600	100	-100
Mining	11,200	11,300	9,900	-100	1,300
Oil and Gas	9,500	9,500	8,400	0	1,100
Construction	17,200	15,600	17,000	1,600	200
Manufacturing	9,900	11,600	10,100	-1,700	-200
Wood Product Manufacturing	300	300	300	0	0
Seafood Processing	6,200	8,000	6,400	-1,800	-200
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	61,800	60,000	60,800	1,800	1,000
Wholesale Trade	6,300	6,200	6,100	100	200
Retail Trade	35,500	34,600	34,800	900	700
Food and Beverage Stores	6,200	6,100	6,000	100	200
General Merchandise Stores	9,100	9,000	9,000	100	100
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	20,000	19,200	19,900	800	100
Air Transportation	5,900	5,800	5,900	100	0
Truck Transportation	3,000	2,900	2,900	100	100
Information	6,900	6,800	6,900	100	0
Telecommunications	4,200	4,100	4,200	100	0
Financial Activities	14,600	14,500	14,400	100	200
Professional and Business Services	22,900	22,600	22,800	300	100
Educational[4] **and Health Services**	36,300	36,200	35,800	100	500
Health Care	26,300	26,300	25,700	0	600
Leisure and Hospitality	28,600	27,200	28,200	1,400	400
Accommodations	6,500	6,100	6,400	400	100
Food Services and Drinking Places	18,000	17,300	17,800	700	200
Other Services	11,600	11,300	11,300	300	300
Government[5]	83,900	83,000	83,300	900	600
Federal Government[6]	16,500	16,400	16,700	100	-200
State Government	25,200	24,900	24,900	300	300
State Government Education	8,100	8,000	8,100	100	0
Local Government	42,200	41,700	41,700	500	500
Local Government Education	24,300	24,400	23,900	-100	400
Tribal Government	3,900	3,900	3,800	0	100

Notes for all exhibits on this page:

[1] Excludes self-employed workers, fishermen, domestic workers, unpaid family workers and nonprofit volunteers

[2] Goods-producing sectors include natural resources and mining, construction and manufacturing.

[3] Service-providing sectors include all others not listed as goods-producing sectors.

[4] Private education only

[5] Includes employees of public school systems and the University of Alaska

[6] Excludes uniformed military

[7] Metropolitan Statistical Area

Sources for all exhibits on this page: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics

2 Unemployment Rates By borough and census area

NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED	Prelim. 04/06	Revised 03/06	Revised 04/05
United States	4.5	4.8	5.9
Alaska Statewide	7.5	7.7	7.1
Anchorage/Mat-Su (MSA)[7]	6.3	6.5	5.9
Municipality of Anchorage	5.9	5.9	5.6
Mat-Su Borough	8.4	9.4	7.4
Gulf Coast Region	9.5	10.0	9.2
Kenai Peninsula Borough	9.7	10.4	9.3
Kodiak Island Borough	7.6	7.0	7.5
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	10.7	12.0	10.8
Interior Region	7.3	7.7	7.0
Denali Borough	10.6	13.2	11.1
Fairbanks North Star Borough (MSA)[7]	6.5	6.8	6.2
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	10.8	11.6	11.8
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	13.6	15.0	12.3
Northern Region	11.1	10.9	11.3
Nome Census Area	13.6	13.7	12.2
North Slope Borough	8.0	8.5	9.5
Northwest Arctic Borough	11.6	10.3	12.4
Southeast Region	7.5	8.5	7.2
Haines Borough	11.6	14.4	11.7
Juneau Borough	5.3	5.7	5.3
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	7.4	8.5	7.6
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan CA	14.9	18.5	12.2
Sitka Borough	5.7	6.1	5.5
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon CA	18.1	21.6	14.9
Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area	10.5	11.8	10.6
Yakutat Borough	11.8	16.7	8.9
Southwest Region	13.7	12.1	12.9
Aleutians East Borough	8.0	7.7	8.6
Aleutians West Census Area	7.4	3.9	7.7
Bethel Census Area	14.6	13.8	13.0
Bristol Bay Borough	16.7	16.7	11.7
Dillingham Census Area	12.0	11.2	12.5
Lake and Peninsula Borough	6.8	11.2	9.4
Wade Hampton Census Area	23.8	22.2	21.7
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	4.7	4.7	5.1
Alaska Statewide	7.0	7.0	6.6

For more current state and regional employment and unemployment data, visit our Web site.

almis.labor.state.ak.us

3 Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment By Region

	Preliminary 04/06	Revised 03/06	Revised 04/05	Changes from: 03/06	Changes from: 04/05	Percent Change: 03/06	Percent Change: 04/05
Anch/Mat-Su (MSA)[7]	164,700	161,900	161,700	2,800	3,000	1.7%	1.9%
Anchorage	147,200	145,000	144,800	2,200	2,400	1.5%	1.7%
Gulf Coast	26,850	26,200	26,950	650	-100	2.5%	-0.4%
Interior	44,100	42,700	43,700	1,400	400	3.3%	0.9%
Fairbanks	37,400	36,800	37,100	600	300	1.6%	0.8%
Northern	16,600	16,600	15,800	0	800	0.0%	5.1%
Southeast	35,550	33,650	35,200	1,900	350	5.6%	1.0%
Southwest	17,500	19,400	17,850	-1,900	-350	-9.8%	-2.0%

Profile: Life Outside the Military

By Susan Erben
Trends Editor

"It's a different life. It's very different..."

The adjustment from military life to civilian life can be brutal.

When Kim Harness retired a year ago March, it had been 22 years since she had last interviewed for a job or filled out a job application.

"I'm telling you, I was in the military for 22 years and I never had to apply for job," she said. The last application she filled out was when she applied to get into the military as a teenager.

Photo by Susan Christianson, Christianson Communications

Harness and others described how working in the civilian world is so different from the military. Promotions are based on time and service in the military, so applications and interviews are rare. Even military acronyms and jargon, including for job titles, can seem like a foreign language to a civilian hiring manager.

"The unknown is what was very fearful for me," said Harness, who retired as an Air Force senior master sergeant at Elmendorf Air Force Base after working at bases in Europe, Japan and throughout the U.S. One of her jobs was the mortuary officer for a five-state area in charge of honor guard and ceremonial teams.

Harness retired March 1, 2005, and within three weeks started work in the resource room at the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development's Midtown Anchorage Job Center. Within six months she became the job center's manager.

Kim Harness (left) at Anchorage's Midtown Job Center in November, where she's manager. "Interviewing, dressing properly – we take it all for granted in the military," Harness said, adding that one of the many things she learned from the Transition Assistance Program workshops was about informational interviews – where a person trying to decide on a particular job or career interviews someone actually working in the job to find out what it's really like, if it's for him or her and how best to get his or her foot in the door.

"Informational interviews – that just blew me away," Harness said. Her first informational interview was with Sharon Chriss, the job center manager at the time. Ironically, now she has Chriss' job. (Chriss went to work for NANA Management Services as its employment coordinator.)

Photo by Kaylene Johnson, Alaska Works Partnership Inc.

Sylvia Melland (left) makes repairs in May to Wilder Construction's waste water treatment system in Anchorage. Melland spent a year in Iraq as a light-wheel mechanic in the Army Reserves. She got back in April 2005 and in January, Ed Flanagan, the coordinator for Alaska's Helmets to Hardhats program, put her in contact with the Operating Engineers Local 302 Apprenticeship Program. The apprenticeship program placed her at Anchorage-based Wilder Construction. The national Helmets to Hardhats program, which was started in 2003, helps veterans connect with construction union apprenticeship programs.

Melland is now a mechanic apprentice at Wilder, and after 6,000 hours – about three years – she'll be a journeyman mechanic, Flanagan said.

He said that out of the some 75 people who were deployed to Iraq out of Melland's B Company 411th Engineers, seven are now union apprentices and Helmets to Hardhats helped them make that connection.

Flanagan said a lot of veterans learn about Helmets to Hardhats at the Department of Labor's TAP workshops and from job center veterans' representatives.

Helmets to Hardhats is congressionally funded and is co-sponsored by national building trade unions and contractor associations. In Alaska, it's affiliated with the nonprofit Alaska Works Partnership Inc., which also has job-training programs, including Women in the Trades, youth construction academies and apprenticeship outreach that focuses on people living in Alaska's villages, an Alaska Works spokeswoman said.

Harness said she knows she's been extremely lucky to have everything fall into place so fast. But she said a lot of what helped her make the adjustment from military to civilian life she learned in the Department of Labor's 3½-day Transition Assistance Program workshop.

The TAP workshops are designed to help people leaving the military (through retirement or otherwise) plan their civilian careers and find meaningful jobs outside the military. The workshops, which have been held in Alaska since 1992, are held throughout the U.S. and on various military installations outside the U.S.; they vary from two days to 3 ½ days, depending on the branch of the military.

Every workshop follows the same general outlines and they're run by facilitators who go through specific training at the National Veterans' Training Institute at the University of Colorado. In Alaska, the instructors are job center veterans' representatives.

People in the workshops learn not only how to write effective resumes and cover letters, con-

duct state-of-the-art job searches, interview well and "dress for success," they also learn how to cope with the stress and demands of changing careers and how to transfer the skills they've acquired in the military to the civilian world.

They learn to assess their own job-related values, take employment tests, set goals and stay organized. They learn about labor market trends in the area where they want to work, networking, cold calls and informational interviews, analyzing want ads, researching a company or a whole career and negotiating job offers.

A benefits specialist from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reviews veterans' benefits for half a day during the workshop. And in Alaska, the TAP workshops also include panel discussions with local employers, mock interviews and a presentation on unemployment insurance benefits, said Kyle Taylor, the Alaska Department of Labor's veterans' services coordinator based in Juneau.

People who are planning to leave the military are encouraged to take a TAP workshop at least once – and multiple times if it's helpful – a year or two before they're scheduled to leave the military, all the way up to three weeks before, said Tom Hertzog, a Department of Labor job center veterans' representative who's run TAP workshops at Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson in Anchorage and elsewhere in the state for 6½ years. The Air Force requires the TAP workshops, he said.

Hertzog said he took part in the TAP workshop nine years ago when he retired as a chief master sergeant after 27 years in the Air Force.

"[People] are amazed at the amount of information that is put out over the course of three days," said Hertzog, who now just runs the Elmendorf workshops; his colleague Mike Walker runs those at Fort Richardson.

Hertzog said the workshops are held each month at Elmendorf and Fort Richardson, as well as at Eielson Air Force Base and Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks. They're usually held twice a year for the Coast Guard in Juneau and once a year at Coast Guard bases in Kodiak, Ketchikan and Sitka.

Photo by Gary L. Martin, Alaska Business Monthly

Ellery Gibbs (above, standing) works with Timothy Koerber to pinpoint a survey spot using GPS. They both work for Bush Construction Surveys Inc. in Wasilla. Gibbs, an eight-year Navy veteran, was a diver/surveyor in the Navy's Seabees until he left the Navy in May 2005. Gibbs was already a journeyman surveyor in the Navy, so things went pretty fast: he went to the Mat-Su Job Center in the end of July and Bill Lund, the veterans' representative, told him to call Flanagan at Helmets to Hardhats immediately. Flanagan said he put Gibbs in touch with the Teamsters union on a Wednesday and Gibbs was working the next Monday as a journeyman surveyor at Bush Construction.

Photo courtesy of Kyle Taylor

Kyle Taylor (above), a lieutenant in the Naval Reserves, poses in May 2005 with a 155 mm howitzer at the Kuwait Naval Base, where he was deployed from March 2005 to last February as part of the Naval Coastal Warfare Squadron 33. The squadron's mission is "to support the troops in Iraq by ensuring the supplies needed there arrive safely," according to a Navy press release.

Because of Taylor's training as a TAP instructor with the Department of Labor, he ended up helping about 100 people in his squadron on his own time, mostly by showing them Internet links to find the local, state and federal veterans benefits they'd be entitled to, plus links to their states' job banks and unemployment programs. He helped about 20 of them with on-line job applications, interview techniques and other advice.

Hertzog said there's a three-month waiting list for the Elmendorf workshop and he limits those to 40 people due to the classroom space. Taylor said the other classes in the state average 15 to 25 people per session. Sometimes they'll add extra workshops when there's an increased demand.

Taylor said that from January through March this year, 341 people attended 16 TAP workshops throughout the state, and in 2005, 1,097 people attended 55 workshops in the state.

Hertzog said he always begins his workshops the same way.

"I always ask how many know *exactly* what they want to do," he said. "Out of 40 – you may get five hands. The other 35 – they aren't sure. Some want an entire career change."

Bonnie Dorman is a 19-year Air Force veteran whose last job was the finance inspector on the Air Force's European Inspector General Team. She said she went through a TAP workshop in Germany a year before she retired in May 2005, then took a planned year off to travel and started in March as an Administrative Clerk III with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services in Anchorage. Dorman said the only reason she felt OK taking a year off – her dream for 10 years – was because the TAP workshop prepared her so well. And she knew she could always attend another one in Alaska if she had to.

She said the difference between military and civilian life can't be overstated. The hardest part for her, she said, was moving away from the military's rigid structure.

"You always know where you're going to eat. You're given money to eat, money for housing, money to work. It's really secure for us," Dorman said. That security hit home, she said, when she talked to a friend about how much he loved his new job, then three weeks later he was laid off. In the military, layoffs are rare; usually people would just be transferred to another base or job, Dorman said.

"It's a different life. It's very different," she said. "For those not prepared for that, it can be very scary. It's overwhelming, actually."

"[TAP] gives you an awareness – an awareness of what's out there and available for you so you can make decisions," Dorman said. "You don't have to run around and figure out how the system works."

She and others said it's the smaller things that are helpful too, such as learning the intricacies of state and federal government application systems or even the fact that job seekers can save money by using the fax machines at job centers.

Reserve or National Guard members are also eligible to attend TAP workshops after being released from at least 180 days of active duty. But the Department of Labor's Taylor said few end up needing the two- to 3½-day workshops. Many in the Reserves or National Guard already have jobs, so their big interest is what benefits they have as veterans, he said.

The federal departments of Defense, Veterans Administration and Labor are looking at ways to tailor TAP for the Reserves and National Guard to keep them from falling through the cracks by not getting any TAP services. The U.S. Government Accountability Office studied the issue and came up with recommendations; many of those are being implemented now.

Taylor, who's been in the Naval Reserves since 1995 and has worked with the Alaska Department of Labor since 2000, was sent to Kuwait from March 2005 to last February. He had about 320 people in his squadron and once word spread of his TAP-instructor experience – the chief of staff put it in the monthly newsletter – people came to him with questions.

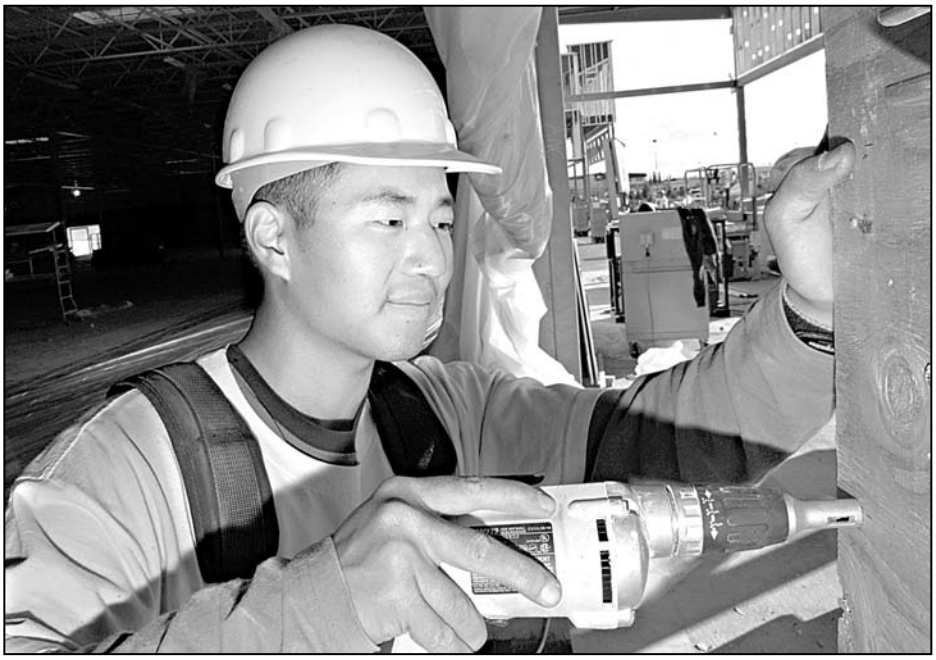


Photo by Gary L. Martin, Alaska Business Monthly

Sung Kyu Kim (above) works with a drill for Neeser Construction Inc. in Anchorage. An equipment operator in the Army Reserves, Kim was deployed to Iraq along with Sylvia Melland (pictured previously), as part of the B Company 411th Engineers. He returned from Iraq in April 2005 and entered the Helmets to Hardhats program the following June. He's been in a four-year carpenter apprentice program since then, and he's still in the Army Reserves.

He said while in Kuwait he helped about 100 people on his own time, mostly by showing them Internet links to their states' Web pages, unemployment programs and job banks, as well as how to find the federal, state and local benefits they'd soon be entitled to as veterans.

Taylor said he helped some, maybe 20 or so, with more in-depth things, such as their online job applications and interview techniques, including a commander, a Washington state resident, who wound up getting an Accountant III position with the Alaska Department of Revenue in Juneau.

Taylor said Reserve and National Guard members will definitely benefit from a shorter version of the TAP workshops geared just for them.

Photo by Gary L. Martin, Alaska Business Monthly

About three-fourths of the students at the Southern Alaska Carpenters Apprentice Training Center in Anchorage begin their apprenticeships without any construction experience outside of high school wood shop, said Bridgette Wilinski, an administrative assistant with the center.

That was Jasmine Lumpkin's case (left) – she lacked construction experience, but that didn't matter. She left active duty with an Army medical unit in 2002 (she's still in the Army Reserves) and had various jobs before she got in contact with the training center a year ago. She's completed her first year of her carpenter apprenticeship and has three to go. Two months a year are spent in the classroom at the center and the rest is on the job, Wilinski said. Lumpkin is currently working at Davis Construction, an Anchorage commercial contractor. She can stay with one contractor throughout her apprenticeship or work for different ones; it's up to her and the contractors, Wilinski said.

The Department of Labor's Hertzog said he often runs into people in Anchorage who've been through the TAP workshop. Others stop by the job center.

"You may not see them for six or eight months, then they stop in and say, 'I got a job. If I hadn't come to TAP, I wouldn't be where I am now.'"

□ □ □

To learn more about the Department of Labor's Transition Assistance Program, go to the department's Alaska Job Center Network Veterans' Services Web site at www.jobs.state.ak.us/veterans or contact Kyle Taylor, the department's veterans' services coordinator at (907) 465-5359 or Kyle_Taylor@labor.state.ak.us. People can also get more information about the program through any job center in the state. The job centers with veterans' representatives include Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Wasilla, Eagle River and Kenai.

For more information about Helmets to Hardhats, go to the program's Web site at www.helmetstohardhats.org, or contact Ed Flanagan, the program's Alaska coordinator, at (907) 790-8883. Both Helmets to Hardhats and Alaska Works Partnership Inc. can be reached toll-free at (866) 993-8181. Alaska Works' local number is (907) 569-4711 and its Web site is www.alaskaworks.org.

To find out more about the Southern Alaska Carpenters Training Center, call (888) 825-1541 in Alaska or (907) 344-1541. The center's Web site is www.acsalaska.net/~sactc.

Trends Authors

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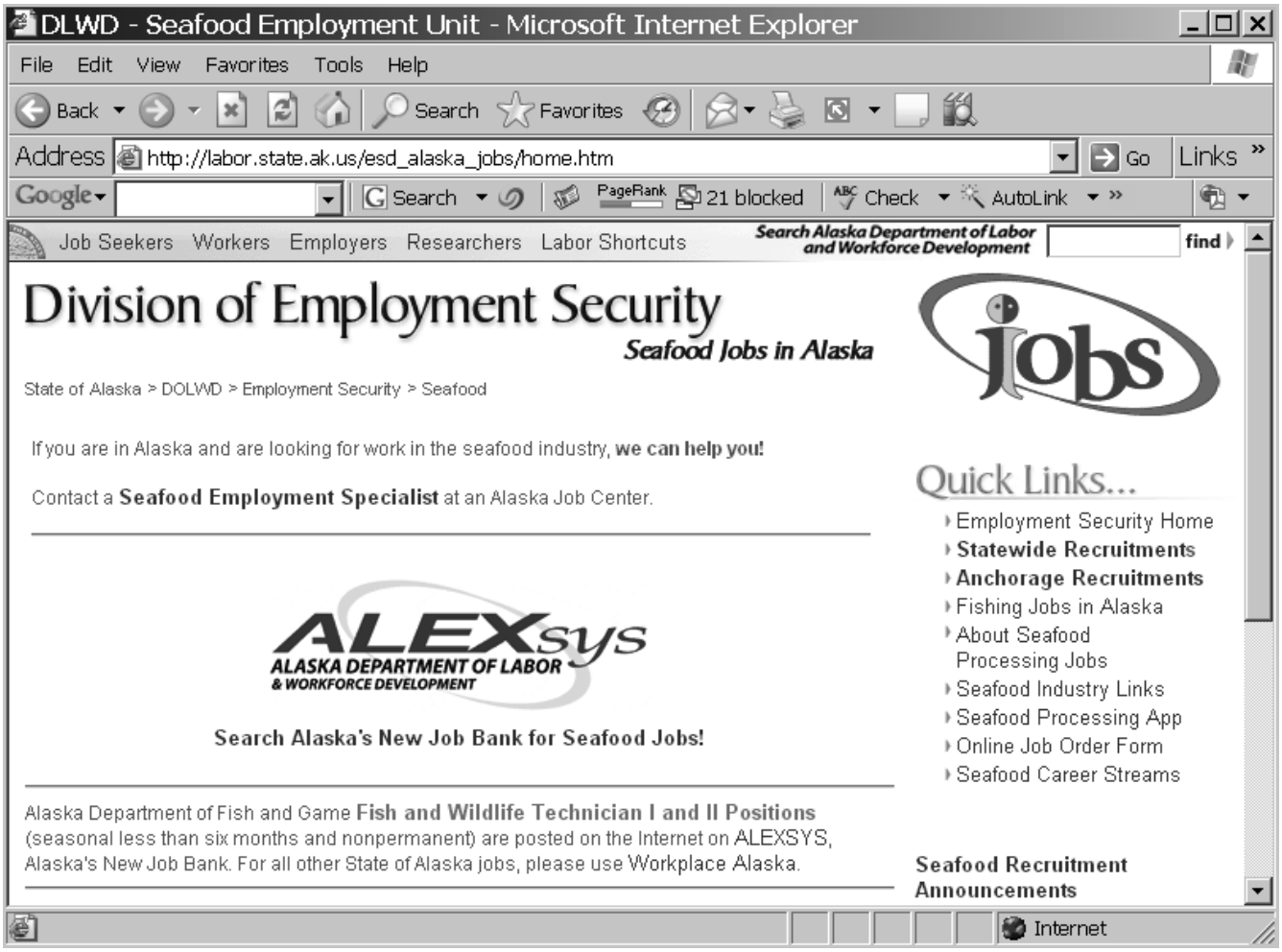
Employer Resources

Seafood Processing Recruitment

Many Alaska Job Centers have employment specialists who are trained to recruit and place qualified job seekers in Alaska's seafood industry. "Seafood" employment specialists network to promote employment, economic stability and growth in Alaska's seafood industry through a no-fee labor exchange that meets and responds to the needs of seafood industry employers and job seekers. They communicate closely with business hiring managers to provide quality pre-screening, orientation and referral of applicants to seafood jobs, targeted job fairs, no-fee interview space, drug and alcohol screening coordination, marketing of job openings in their area, customized recruitments and a job-ready labor pool of Alaskans who are ready to work from one fishery season to the next. The "Seafood Jobs in Alaska" Web site (go to www.jobs.state.ak.us and click on "Seafood Jobs") offers employers information about recruitment, job fairs, training and more. Call the Anchorage Seafood Employment Office at (907) 269-4775 or toll-free in Alaska at (800) 473-0688 for information.



Time	Speaker	Conversation	Resources	Equipment
September 18 **BP Energy Bldg.** 8:30 am – 9:00 am	Welcome ROTC Post Colors General Campbell National Military Family Association MOAA AKPTA Navy League Debra Bonito	Welcomes from sponsors	Everyone is in large room together	Flags LCD Projector Screen
9:00 am – 9:15 am	General Campbell	Mission of the Day Will start with panel discussion in this room then you will have a chance to attend two 30 minute sessions then we will break for lunch, with a panel discussion from our legislators..finish two more 30 minute sessions then move into large group discussion choosing your passion prioritizing action items desired. Report small group discussions to entire group then all will have the opportunity to vote on priorities. Then we will finish with our last panel discussion with students	Answer the Question: What is Alaska's capacity to support it's military and families in the areas of: • Health Care • Education • Veteran Benefits & Accessibility • DVR: Placement & Transition	Overhead of agenda with times and they will have this in their notebook

		from an Operation Hero project and discuss our next steps.		
9:15 am -9:45 am	**Family Support Panel:** What are the biggest needs and best programs happening?	Jenia Benia (Elmendorf) Jan Meyers (Guard) Brian Griggs Fairbanks? Kodiak? Other?		
9:45 am – 10:00 a.m.	Move to individual Rooms while receiving a snack attack from ASYMCA	Pete Mulcahy, ASYMCA		
10:00 am – 10:30 am & 10:30 am – 11:00 am	All subjects will repeat four times	Experts in each topic will address successes and areas of concern for each group		
	Health Care: Panel Discussion Will need speakers for each of these	Community Access/ Elmendorf/Tricare/ANTHC		ISER report on health care availability in Alaska
	Education: Panel Discussion	K-12, VA Coordinator at UAA, Military Education Offices/ Department of Labor Education Office		
11:00 am – 11:30 am & 11:30 am – 12:00 pm	All subjects will repeat four times			
	Veterans Administration: Benefits & Accessibility			

	DVR: Placement & Transition	DVR Training Alaska Housing & Finance Corporation Work Force Development		
12:00 pm – 1:15 pm	Lunch Legislative Panel ASYMCA Presentation			PowerPoint/LCD
1:15 pm – 2:15 pm	Discuss & Prioritize Needs	Participants will choose which subject is their passion and prioritize items	AKPTA facilitators will record groups work and keep discussion focused on what they know is happening and what they know they want Group will then prioritize top 5 items	Flip charts/ pens Record discussion Final flip with priorities
2:15 pm – 2:30 pm	Break then gather back in large room by subject	Facilitator will move flip charts to larger room		
2:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Each group will report back how they came to their priorities			
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	Silent voting for top three priorities in each category			
3:15 pm – 3:30 pm	Summarize group prioritizing Gain agreement			
3:30 pm- 4:00 pm	**Panel Discussion**	Operation Hero		
4:00 pm – 4:15 pm	Next Steps Thank you's	Discussions will be captured with priorities	Final report will go to groups & Murkowski's office.	

Military Coalition Meeting Budget
December 7, 2006

Space Rental:	$3000.00
Food for participants: (100 people x $18.00 lunch plus gratuity) Snack Attack Lunch Afternoon	$2000.00
Notebooks & Resources: 100 notebooks, CD's, Copying Services	$3000.00
Travel expenses for participants' airfare and hotel: Participants would be family support personnel and family members Fairbanks Kodiak	$2500.00
Total Budget:	$10,500.00
	3 X
	$31,500.00

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NMFA
National Military Family Association

Report on the

Cycles of Deployment:

An Analysis of Survey Responses from
April through September, 2005

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Kim Edger, Webmaster
Michelle Joyner, Director, Communications
Hannah Pike, Publications Specialist

NMFA thanks the families of the uniformed services who completed this survey and shared their stories and suggestions with us.

For further information on NMFA surveys and this report, contact NMFA, 2500 N Van Dorn St. Ste. 102, Alexandria, VA 22302 or families@nmfa.org or 800-260-0218.

Cover photo courtesy U.S. Navy by Photographer's Mate Airman John P. Curtis.

National Military Family Association Report on the Cycles of Deployment Survey An Analysis of Survey Responses from April–September, 2005

Forward

In July 2004, the National Military Family Association (NMFA) published *Serving the Home Front: An Analysis of Military Family Support from September 11, 2001 through March 31, 2004*. This report provided a snapshot of family support for that specific timeframe and noted the progress made in the support of uniformed services families during the first 18 months of the Global War on Terror. In its 2004 report, NMFA noted that more research would be needed on the long-term effects of repeated deployments and the reunion and reintegration of families. NMFA conducted a Return and Reunion Survey on its website (www.nmfa.org) in late 2004, which again indicated a need for further input from uniformed services families regarding the effects of multiple deployments.

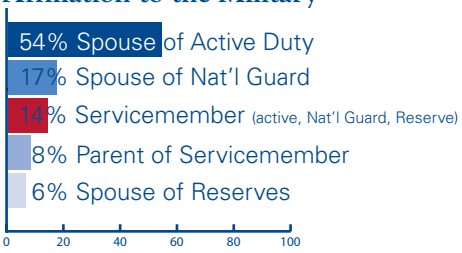
Using lessons learned from the Return and Reunion Survey, as well as the web survey and focus groups conducted as part of the *Serving the Home Front* project, the NMFA Government Relations Department developed its *Cycles of Deployment* survey, which was posted on the NMFA website from April through September 2005. The survey was marketed through the NMFA website and publications, DoD and Service family support professionals, the *Military Times* newspapers, NMFA installation Representatives, and word of mouth among families.

A copy of the survey questions is available in Appendix 1 of this report. A total of 1,592 respondents, representing both active and reserve components from six of the seven uniformed services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service), completed the survey, with 70 percent of respondents offering comments and personal stories regarding their deployment experiences. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with twelve respondents. Half of the 1,592 respondents had their servicemember currently deployed.

Maj. Scott Benson is trampled by his three sons after returning home April 19 from a three-month deployment in Southwest Asia. Major Benson is assigned to the 41st Airlift Squadron here. (U.S. Air Force photo by Claire Dattilo)

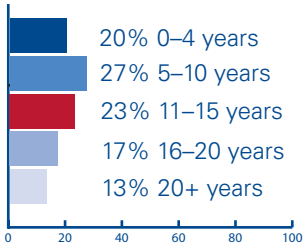
Survey Demographics

Affiliation to the Military



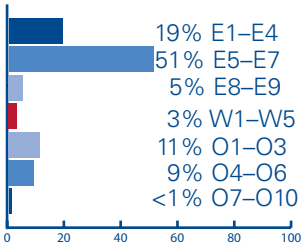
77% of respondents were military spouses.

Years of Service

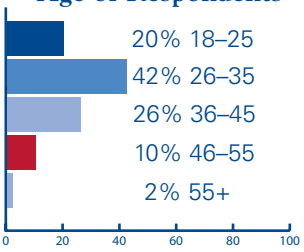


47% of respondents have 10 years or less in service.

Servicemembers' Rank

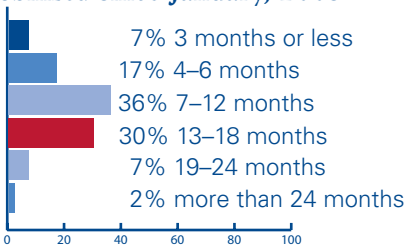


Age of Respondents

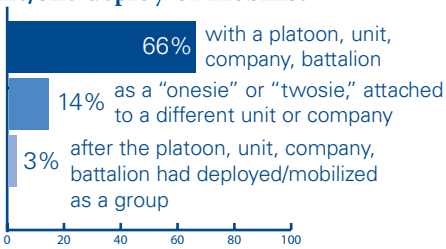


62% of respondents are 35 years of age or younger.

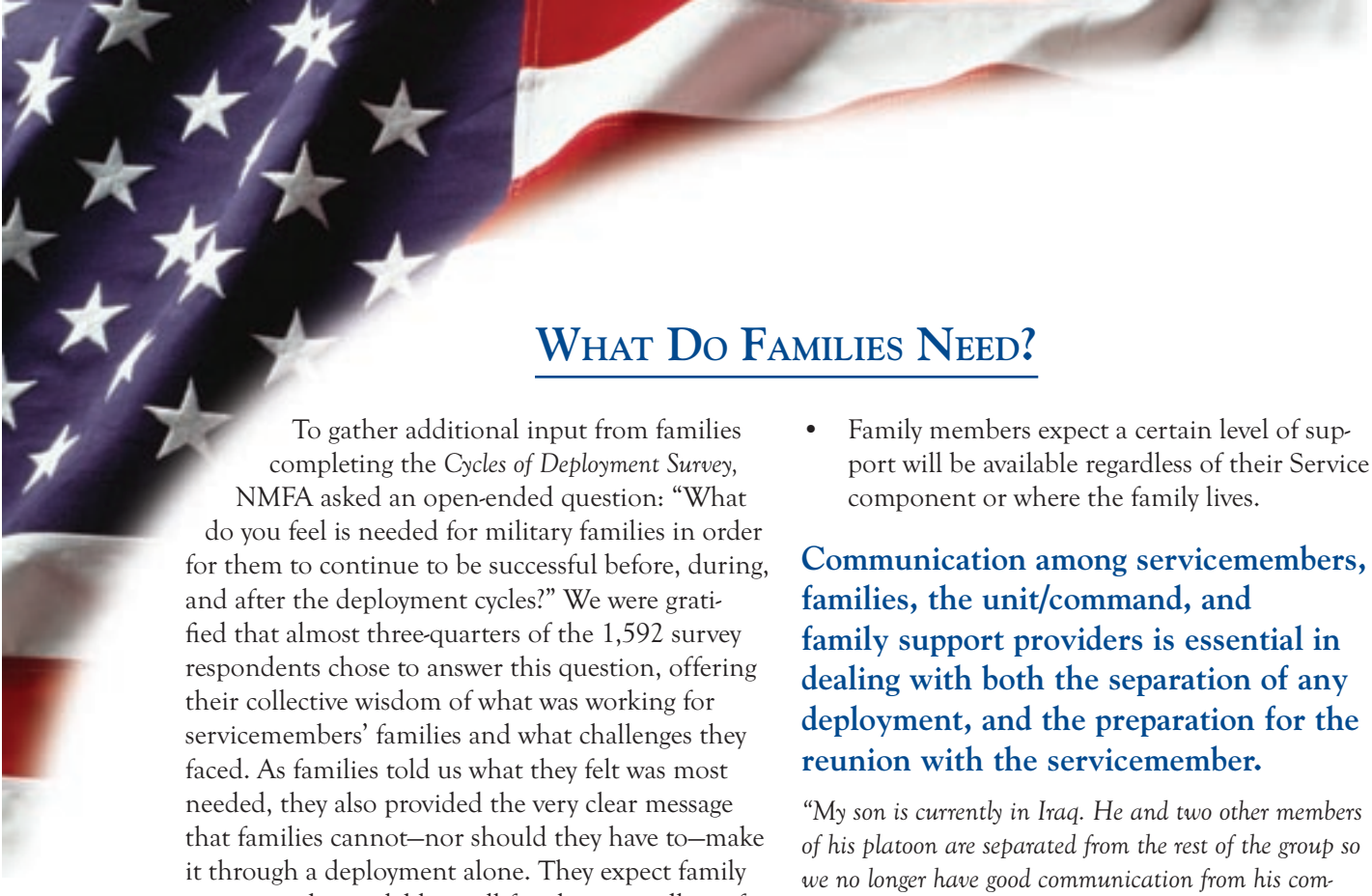
Total length of time servicemember has been deployed or mobilized since January, 2003



When the servicemember last deployed, how did he/she deploy or mobilize?



* Percentages rounded to nearest whole number (non-responses not shown)



What Do Families Need?

To gather additional input from families completing the *Cycles of Deployment Survey,* NMFA asked an open-ended question: "What do you feel is needed for military families in order for them to continue to be successful before, during, and after the deployment cycles?" We were gratified that almost three-quarters of the 1,592 survey respondents chose to answer this question, offering their collective wisdom of what was working for servicemembers' families and what challenges they faced. As families told us what they felt was most needed, they also provided the very clear message that families cannot—nor should they have to—make it through a deployment alone. They expect family support to be available to all families, regardless of their Service component or where the family lives. Respondents acknowledged they had a role to play in their own family readiness; however, they looked to their commands, their unit volunteers, and their communities to recognize their sacrifice and help them make it through a deployment.

Throughout this report, we have included representative responses from survey respondents' answers to the question: "What do families need?" Most responses fell into several general categories, the most common of which were:

- Communication among servicemembers, families, the unit/command, and family support providers is essential in dealing with both the separation of any deployment and the preparation for the reunion with the servicemember.
- Deployment lengths, the frequency of deployments, and the day-to-day operational tempo (OPTEMPO) of servicemembers are taking a toll on servicemembers' families.
- Continuous training of support providers and families is needed and must extend into the reunion phase.
- Family members expect a certain level of support will be available regardless of their Service component or where the family lives.

Communication among servicemembers, families, the unit/command, and family support providers is essential in dealing with both the separation of any deployment, and the preparation for the reunion with the servicemember.

"My son is currently in Iraq. He and two other members of his platoon are separated from the rest of the group so we no longer have good communication from his command. He no longer has regular access to phone or internet, so we're much more out of touch. His family readiness officer updates us on whether or not they are safe, which is very nice."

–Marine Corps Parent

In its 2004 report, NMFA stated: "Commitment to communication is the key to coordinating family support programs. This communication needs to be a continuous flow of accurate, timely information from the highest levels of the Services to the individual servicemembers and their families." Commitment to communication remains a priority today, but with a slightly different emphasis than earlier in the war. Then, the logistical challenges of communicating with the servicemember and command were the common complaints. These included slow postal mail, servicemembers' difficulties in accessing phones or computers in the theater of operation, or units' unsophisticated communication channels with isolated families. Families of servicemembers who are remotely assigned or in specialties such as submariners still reported they do not have regular communication with their family members; however, the majority of family members regularly correspond with their servicemembers via e-mail, phone,

and mail. "Hearing that voice" is very important. Family members worry about the expense of buying phone cards, maintaining Internet service, and mailing packages. They would also like to have longer than fifteen to twenty minute phone conversations once or twice a week. Seventeen percent of the survey respondents reported that communication with the servicemember was the top challenge during the deployment.

"[We need] consistent communication from the leadership of my husband, telling us what is going on. So often the servicemember downplays situations and doesn't get the real truth so we have a false picture and the media does not help."

–Marine Duty Spouse

"Successful deployments are about communication."

–Army Soldier

Even though some families still talked of challenges in maintaining regular communication with their servicemember, respondents in the *Cycles of Deployment Survey* were just as likely to talk about the quality of communication and their expectations regarding communication with their servicemember's unit, command, and volunteer network. Families emphasized the need for open lines of communication between themselves and the servicemember's unit, command, and volunteers as an important element of effective support. In fact, many indicated that what they needed and expected first and foremost from the unit or its representatives was frequent communication regarding unit activities and the well-being of the deployed servicemembers. They also wanted to know someone cared about their well-being and understood the challenges they faced. Their comments indicated families believe that good family support starts with good communication.

"We understand the need for being a little evasive as to what the soldiers are doing, where they are, etc... but it would be nice to know what they are doing in general."

–Army Parent

Families understand the need for operational security, but desire more information from the chain of command. They would like to know when the servicemember is deploying and where he/she is going. Only one-third of the survey respondents reported having communication with the unit or unit volunteer network at the critical pre-deployment stage. Once the servicemember is deployed, family members want to know generally what the servicemember's unit is doing, how the members of the unit are faring, and when he/she will return, even if it just a "ballpark figure." Not knowing even that approximate date is stressful. One-third of the survey participants reported contact with the unit early in the deployment. When the command or unit fails to relay this information, the families want to know: "What are they hiding from us?" It is at the mid-point of the deployment cycle that more than a quarter of the families reported feeling the greatest stress. Families bombarded by press reports about the war want to be able to combat the sometimes negative press with accurate information.

Staff Sgt. James Smith holds his eight-month old son Malik for the first time after returning home to Nevada from a 13-month deployment to Kuwait and Iraq. Smith is assigned to the 257th Transportation Company. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army.

"Ongoing support groups would be a great help as it gives spouses the opportunity to connect with others who are experiencing many of the same circumstances as they are going through. Younger spouses are able to meet and talk to more experienced spouses giving them the opportunity to gain knowledge from their life experience."

–Navy Spouse

Families also cited communication with other military family members as very important. Spouses and parents want to commiserate with someone who understands, someone in the same situation, and especially someone who has experienced a prior deployment. Personal contact from a representative of the unit, whether it is the rear detachment commander or a unit volunteer leader checking to see if the family is okay, makes one feel less alone.

"[Families need] contact with other families who are deployed with your servicemember. I know we have our own life but even a phone call is helpful."

–Coast Guard Spouse

Survey results indicate that contact with the unit and its family readiness/support group during the deployment correlates to families' improved ability to deal with subsequent deployments. Almost 13 percent of all respondents reported no contact with their unit or unit volunteer groups. In addition, 3 percent chose not to have contact with their unit or its volunteer group. A higher percentage of respondents who indicated they were better able to deal with multiple deployments had contact from the unit or unit volunteer network during the deployment than did those respondents who stated it was harder to deal with subsequent deployments. Only 5 percent of family members who reported an increased ability to deal with deployments had no contact with these avenues of information and support, an indication of at least one tool for successful families.

Families indicated the support provided must be ongoing and not fade away as the deployment continues. When asked about stress during deployment, respondents indicated that not all families react to deployment in the same way or at the same time. The ability to handle the mid-deployment routine seems to be crucial for families' handling of subsequent deployments. Among respondents who said subsequent deployments were harder than the first, 37 percent stated they experienced the most stress during the middle of the deployment.

"Return dates have not been released, I've stopped hearing from the battalion which was quite spread out in Iraq, and with as difficult as this deployment has been I know we are going to need to be prepared due to changes at home and changes for our servicemember."

–Navy Reserve Spouse

"[Families need] preparation for the psychological changes affecting the soldier upon return home. Things do not immediately return to 'normal.' Soldiers go through emotional 'homesickness' for the soldiers they were deployed with, and that was not something I was prepared for."

–Army Parent

One of the most significant survey findings was that the information uniformed services families desire is not solely what they need to get them through the actual deployment. They also want to know what the servicemember is experiencing so they will be more prepared for the reunion. "Forewarned is forearmed" seems to be the attitude. For example, if the family knows that a particular unit has had difficulty relating to the Iraqi people, then it will be less puzzling when the servicemember exhibits a great deal of anger after returning home. What stood out in many survey responses was that for families, communication during deployment is directly linked to the reunion process, the reintegration of the family, and the mental health needs of all concerned.

Deployment lengths, the frequency of deployments, and the day-to-day OPTEMPO of servicemembers are taking a toll on servicemembers' families.

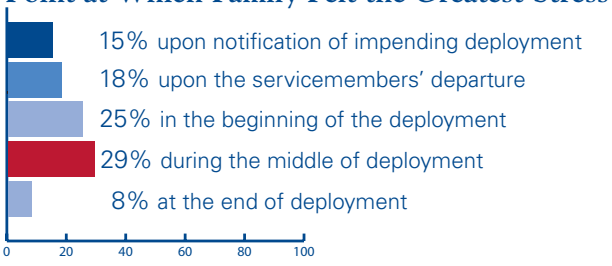
"If there was some way to shorten the length to six or seven months, it would be a little more doable for families to see the end in sight. People don't realize how much happens in six months let alone a whole year or more. Families cannot continue to make things work with multiple year-long tours. The whole concept of feeling defeated before you have even started is overwhelming. You feel as though the cards are stacked against you."

–Army Spouse

"People are not realizing that the National Guard and Reserves make up half of our Nation's military. It is an awful feeling and we were not prepared for 18 months of deployment."

–Army National Guard Spouse

Point at Which Family Felt the Greatest Stress



The amount of time servicemembers and their families have together is limited and very valuable. While families from all Services commented that deployments kept lengthening, it was no surprise that Army National Guard and Reserve families reported the greatest stress concerning deployment length.

Their servicemembers typically experience family separations of close to eighteen months—several months of training prior to the deployment, twelve months "boots on the ground," and at least a few weeks following the servicemember's return home. These families are quick to point out they are experiencing the longest family separation of any Service families and that the length of these deployments is having a detrimental effect. Family members comment about the time spent "training" before departing for foreign soil. They want to be assured that the time is used wisely and that the servicemember is not just "sitting around." Eighteen months is two sets of holidays for many who feel that a twelve- or six-month deployment is more "doable." As one spouse related, "I can do a six month deployment standing on my head." As the deployment lengthens, family members worry more about the effect of the servicemember's absence on the family dynamic.

"I have made 6 total deployments. The actual deployment is NOT the greatest obstacle. The workup cycle is the hardest part, at least for the Navy. We start the cycle 6-9 months prior. We go underway for 2-3 weeks at a time (sometimes longer, sometimes shorter). We return home and need to reintegrate into our families. The actual deployment is by far easier to deal with; we know we are gone, we know our approximate return date."
–Navy Sailor

"The optempo for our unit was VERY high. I had anxiety over accidents occurring because they were 'on the razor's edge' for so long. I think there needs to be a balance before and after. Unfortunately, this isn't always able to occur due to sudden changes in deployments."
–Navy Spouse

"Allow servicemembers to have some time off to readjust to family life!!! Preferably without having to use up all their leave days. Give them an 'adjustment to real life' period before running them like crazy just after they get back. Chaos is not healthy after a deployment (especially a lengthy one)."
–Army Soldier

As the operational tempo remains high both during deployments and at the home installations, families are concerned their servicemembers are working long hours without a break preparing for or recovering from deployments. When asked about their greatest challenges after the servicemember's return, 43 percent of the respondents cited concern the servicemember would have to deploy again. Respondents referenced a need for mandatory leave to replenish the spirit. Families worry about the long-term effects on the family of the "there, but not really" servicemember, who seems to come home only long enough to eat a meal and sleep. Families worry about the physical, emotional, and mental health of maintaining this pace and that OPTEMPO at home and the prospect of a subsequent deployment are making their reintegration with the servicemember difficult.

When asked about their greatest challenges after the servicemember's return, 43 percent of the respondents cited concern the servicemember would have to deploy again.

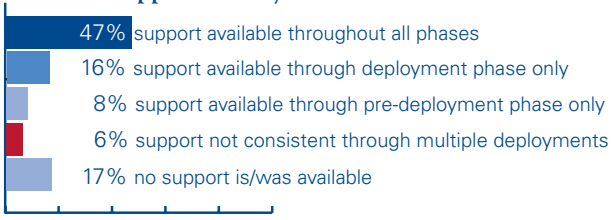
Continuous training of support providers and families is needed and must extend into the reunion phase.

"With deployments happening out of the blue, there need to be steps made to ensure that the families and servicemembers are prepared before they even know when deployment is, so things aren't rushed."
–Navy Spouse

"Have training sessions for 'how are you coping now' like the pre-deployment things. We forget a lot of the info we get in pre-deployment meetings. Even our notes are not enough. We think we can remember more than we really can."
–Army National Guard Spouse

"After the reunion stress–please consider adding something to the extent of learning how to share household responsibilities again. So many of us do it all while our spouse is deployed and get irritated when duties are shared again or if our spouse may unknowingly criticize the way we did something while he/she was deployed. Based on my own experience and talking with friends, this is a common experience post-deployment that many couples struggle with."
–Army Spouse

Level of Support Family Received



NMFA's *Serving the Home Front* report noted that: "Training is a continuous step... and the challenge lies in reaching the families who need it." Responses to the *Cycles of Deployment Survey* indicate this challenge remains, despite the increased activities of family support providers and commands and the increased realization by families of the need to become ready. Less than one-half of the respondents reported a consistent level of family support throughout the pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment phases and 17 percent reported no support was available.

Families are eager to know what to expect and how to locate needed resources. Respondents noted briefings and special activities are usually held when a large group of servicemembers are deployed, but the families of the individual augmentees—the "onesies and twosies"—are often forgotten. This training needs to be conducted repeatedly throughout the deployment cycle rather than as an optional, one-time session. This continuity of the information flow is most critical to the "suddenly military" National Guard/Reserve community. A pre-deployment briefing held the same weekend that the servicemember deploys is not meeting the need for these families to make the transition from weekend warrior to active duty.

Lt. Col. Rey Q. Masinsin, the commanding officer of Marine Air Control Squadron 2, embraces his son Taylor and daughter Torii after returning, Feb. 13, from a seven-month deployment to Iraq. Photo submitted 03/03/2006 Taken by Cpl. J. R. Stence

"I think the hardest part for my family was the fact that as a Guard family, we had never been through a deployment before. I knew nothing about that life, the phases, anything. I felt very unsure about where my resources were and who to call for help. I really think that, regardless of military status, every family needs to have a basic knowledge of deployment life...be it written resources, workshops, what have you."

–Air National Guard Spouse

"The initial phase was difficult and I felt that the Army information was thrown at us at one of the most emotional times and I couldn't absorb who could help me when. I still haven't had time to figure that out. I think if I had been given that information the same time as my husband was activated, or while he was at the training prior to leaving for Iraq when life was still sort of normal because I could talk to him often, I would have been better prepared."

–Army National Guard Spouse

Most active duty family members are used to the "military lifestyle." They live near other Service families and have experience dealing with the military bureaucracy. The "suddenly military" National Guard and Reserve families often do not. Prior to September 11, 2001, these reserve component families could expect their servicemembers to participate in two weeks of annual training or a short mobilization for natural disasters. Many are lost in the military bureaucracy because they do not necessarily know how the complex support systems work.

Despite extensive efforts by National Guard and Reserve leaders and family program staff to expand their outreach and information efforts, National Guard and Reserve families were the most vocal of all survey respondents regarding their need for additional information, especially in the pre-deployment phase. They want briefings sooner rather than later, with detailed information about TRICARE, finances, and family support resources. They also want briefings offered more than once. Preparing for a servicemember's deployment requires a great deal of new information that may take time to absorb. Question and answer sessions after a period of time for reading the information provided, exploring the websites, and attempting to access the system or find a TRICARE provider increase the likelihood of a family's successful adjustment. Guard and Reserve families stated the need for a single point of contact when a problem arises or when they need information. Some talked about needing a reference book containing all the accurate and updated contact numbers and available community resources, both civilian and military, to keep all the information in one place.

"I am new to the military family scene and it would be nice to find out if there is someone that can tell me what to expect when he comes home. I am finding it difficult to find this type of information. I have talked to several counseling services and they don't offer this and I am referred to another service that doesn't offer it either."

–Navy Spouse

In the deployment cycle, few things are as eagerly anticipated as the servicemember's return. However, survey respondents reported a high level of stress throughout the deployment in anticipation of the reintegration of the servicemember into the family and community. They wanted to know what to expect, what is normal/abnormal, and what to do about it. As we have stated, regular communication from the unit and command during the actual deployment is part of this requested information. Reunion/reintegration briefings for the servicemember and the family members before they are reunited are important, but many families are not taking advantage of any of the formal reunion programs to prepare for their servicemembers' homecoming. Only one out of every three survey participants stated they did something specifically to prepare for the reunion, either taking part in a formal reunion training program or talking to others who have been through the reunion process before.

A crowd of family and friends anxiously wait on the pier for the arrival of the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) at Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, Calif., on July 23, 2004. The Ronald Reagan is the Navy's newest and most technologically advanced aircraft carrier and was completing a two-month transit from Norfolk, Va., to her homeport in San Diego, Calif. The ship was commissioned in July 2003. DoD photo by Petty Officer 1st class Felix Garza, U.S. Navy.

"The largest 'adjustment' issue we had to deal with was his redeployment, that looming over our heads, being recently married, and dealing with back to back deployments as a reservist is very frustrating. Also, in the readjustment phase after his return, finding our 'role' in what we each want to do...that compromise, and not always doing what we wanted to do individually...having time to ourselves, knowing he was leaving again was very hard."

–Marine Corps Reserve Spouse

Family members are concerned about the relationships within the family. The need for marriage counseling and couples retreats was a common theme among the respondents. How the children, especially the very young or the teenagers, will re-connect with a parent who may have been absent for most of their lives, was another common concern. Three-quarters of the survey respondents stated that zero to three months after the servicemember's return was the time of greatest stress.

"Three deployments have caused great mental strain on me as the spouse of a servicemember. Thank goodness for mental health services, which I have used for more than a year now and will continue to use. I have to work daily on managing depression and anxiety, which I feel are a direct result of the deployments."

–Air National Guard Spouse

The good news for family support professionals who believe military families are reluctant to seek help for mental health issues is that many survey respondents did recognize counseling is an option for them. Families perceive counseling and mental health support as especially helpful if it is confidential and with a professional familiar with the military. Anger management classes and family counseling for the servicemember, spouse, and children apart and together were requested by the respondents. Almost half commented that they have used or would use counseling. This percentage increased among families who had dealt with multiple deployments. Three quarters of those who stated they were better able to deal with subsequent deployments found counseling services to be helpful.

Family members expect a certain level of support will be available regardless of their Service component or where the family lives.

"I feel with the reserve units there is not enough contact with the command and the family service centers. My husband was active duty for 10 years and I am aware of the support that is available to them, and the support for reserve families is practically non-existent. It should be more available to them even when they are a great distance from a military installation."

–Navy Reserve Spouse

"Our situation is unusual because the servicemember did not actually deploy for 2004, but was in Korea for nearly 15 months, unaccompanied. Now we face a deployment to Iraq. I think support needs to be available when servicemembers are gone at any time, not just deployments, and that has not been the case so far."

–Army Spouse

In the eyes of the survey respondents, "The Military" has established an expectation that the uniformed services are family-friendly. As a consequence, just as they expect their servicemember will probably have to deploy in support of the mission, families expect there to be a certain level of family support available to them when they need it. Families expect this support to be integrated across the Services and components. They expect their commanders to recognize their needs. They assume all the support systems of all types of units should work together. The families do not give specific grades to each part. As far as they are concerned, the boundaries among their rear detachment/rear party, family readiness/support volunteers, and professional support staff at their Service or installation family centers are blurred. This expectation extends to TRICARE, regardless of where their health care is delivered or who is providing health benefit information and customer service.

"We are all in this together—it doesn't matter the branch of service."

–Army Reserve Spouse

Survey respondents countered the assumption made by commanders at all levels that families already know what their family support resources are and how to access them. They sent a powerful message that most families do not know (and don't really care) who is in charge of what, who is paid or not. How far the family lives from the unit does not really matter, nor do Service or component distinctions. What does matter is that the promised support and information are provided.

"Family Readiness Groups are the most productive way for families to reach the end of a deployment in the best shape possible."

–Army National Guard Spouse

"The Family Support Group is often the difference between feeling supported and doing well during long underway periods or feeling alone and not coping well. Someone should give them money. They are always struggling for fundraising, often paying out of wives' pockets for really key things, like welcome baskets, kid's X-mas parties, etc. These things may sound trivial, but when you haven't seen your husband for 4 months, and you're not sure you're going to make it through without losing your mind, they are key."

–Navy Spouse

The family support expectation needs to mesh with the reality of services and programs that can be provided. As NMFA said in its *Serving the Home Front* report: "The expectations of servicemembers, family members, and 'the military' all need to be established and communicated." The backbone of much of this support is the Family Readiness Groups (FRG), Family Support Groups (FSG), Key Volunteers (KV), and Ombudsman programs. Many families see these programs as the main source of their support and think of them in the same way they regard unit representatives and family center personnel. However, as unrealistic as this expectation might be, many families, especially the new and inexperienced members, expect the leaders of these groups to be well-trained and available when needed (24/7) throughout the deployment.

Many respondents expressed concern that volunteers were becoming fatigued and subject to "burn-out." They stated that the leaders of their unit family groups should be paid or have paid professional support personnel assigned to their groups. They noted that command support of the groups and their leadership is essential in establishing the need, the guidelines, the information flow, and the quality control. Families expect commands to be involved. If commanders at all levels do not communicate that these programs are important, stay involved in their activities, and give them the resources they need, families' expectations will not be met.

"It's important for me to try and establish a foundation with the families of our unit. I do not want my first contact with them to be a deployment. Because it's the Reserves, everyone has other lives. However, this war and any future wars are depending upon the Reserves like they were active duty. It's time that Family Readiness Groups became more involved with their families in Reserve units."

–Army Reserve Spouse

Unit family readiness/support groups are a lifeline for many family members. Membership in these groups is automatic and the group is an expected part of military life. If the group is organized after

the deployment starts, located many miles away from families, fails to include extended family members, or doesn't have active command support, then discontent will follow. The quality of the family readiness/support group can make or break a successful deployment for a family trying to cope. More importantly, many families gauge the commitment of the whole Service chain of command to their well-being by what happens or does not happen in their unit family group.

"My husband is deployed...out of Korea so this has been a 'unique' experience which has been handled horribly by the Army. Family members ...have NOT been contacted by command and no official FRG sites were established until they were in the 6th and 7th months of deployment–and even then info is sketchy. We are told to check one site for official news and updates but nothing is updated, then the site is changed and no one is told, then it's changed back to the original site and no one is told. We hear everything through 'unofficial' channels (i.e. my husband said this, her husband said that). There are family members (spouses, parents, children) located all across the country who have been abandoned by the military during this deployment."

–Army Spouse

"Yeah, that's my dad," little Michael Standfill (center) seems to say as he intently watches his father Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Standfill kiss his wife Terri during their reunion on Aug. 18, 2000. Michael's father, who is a Navy operations specialist, just returned from a six-month deployment to the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf aboard the USS Mahan (DDG 72). The Mahan was one of nine ships assigned to the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Battle Group which enforced no-fly zones over the former Yugoslavia and Southern Iraq. DoD photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Martin Maddock, U.S. Navy.

"I feel it's an injustice for soldiers to be cross-leveled from their original unit to another unit. The gaining unit doesn't stay in contact with their new soldier's family and their original unit drops them from their lists and the family is left out on their own to try and find someone or resources to help them through the difficult time of deployment."

–Army Reserve Spouse

"Most support groups focus on the spouse left behind. There are a large number of us who did not leave a spouse behind but we left our kids with grandparents. Not a lot of resources available to a non-military set of grandparents. The military could make it much easier to put our kids in the hands of our parents when we deploy. This isn't the first time we have done this; before, the kids went to my parents' home from my home base. Nothing special was done or even offered for them, they went and found it on their own. Spouses' groups of deployed servicemembers were available but not appropriate for my situation."

–Air Force Servicemember

"Extended family needs services also–I am the sister of a soon-to-be deployed servicemember, and we live and have raised her son together. There doesn't seem to be anything for someone in my position—family, but not on the same level as a spouse and children for support."
–Army Sister

Families whose servicemembers deployed from unaccompanied tours in Korea to Iraq ask, "Where's my group?" Families of individual augmentees ask, "Who is my group?" One-third of the survey participants who identified their servicemember as deploying as a "onesie or twosie" stated that no support was available to them. Families of cross-leveled servicemembers deploying with units other than their home unit ask: "Do I belong to the losing unit's group or the gaining unit's—or both?" Families who have just completed a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move ask: "How do I find my group when I've just moved and my servicemember has already deployed?" Extended family members know there should be a group for them, but are unsure where to find it. Whose responsibility is it to help them connect to the support that is available for them?

Although the current cycles of deployment are challenging, families are proud of their servicemember and their own special service to our country. They understand that family support is primarily their personal responsibility, but they expect "The Military" to be involved in that support as well.

What Else Did Respondents Say?

While the majority of respondents' comments were linked to the four themes described above—communication, OPTEMPO, training, and expectations regarding support—many also referenced the day-to-day challenges faced by families dealing with deployment. Experienced families know that when the servicemember leaves, whether for a deployment or a training exercise, a major appliance will break, the children will get sick, and the car will break down. These day-to-day hassles of dealing with a deployment can become overwhelming if the family is focusing so much on the well-being of the servicemember. Child care concerns, school issues, house maintenance, and tensions at the spouse's workplace can all add up. Although the problems in each area may be minor, the sum of all is major stress.

> With 2 small children and a full-time job it is hard to juggle all of the requirements. You have to pick your battles.
>
> –Army National Guard Spouse

"I would like to see some no-cost child care in our community for dependents of deployed servicemembers, especially when they are new to the area and don't know anyone they can ask. When my husband was deployed I never felt I could afford child care for my 3 children for me to go out, have time for me as the mother. Now I realize, after the deployment is finished, that would have really helped alleviate a lot of stress for me."

–Marine Corps Spouse

"School involvement! ...Anything that helps out our children during a deployment also helps us as spouses left behind. When I see my children, I see a piece of my husband, and when he's gone, I become ultra sensitive to their needs."

–Marine Corps Spouse

Almost 500,000 military children are five years of age or younger. Much has been done to help military families obtain affordable child care in their communities. But there remains a need. Sometimes just a three or four hour period away from young children can make or break a spouse's week. Guard and Reserve families reported that dealing with the children was one of their greatest challenges during a deployment.

More than 600,000 children of servicemembers are school-aged. They primarily attend civilian public schools. In many cases, these children are a distinct minority in their school. Respondents noted that the staffs at their children's schools may not understand what these children experience when a family member is gone. The remaining adults in that family take on the additional burden of having to educate their children's educators. While military parents know they must act as their children's advocate, they are frustrated at the lack of teacher training in this area.

"I have used approximately two months of vacation time from work for the purpose of helping my family prepare for the deployment and 15 day R&R [Rest and Recuperation], We need to lobby Congress to pass the Military Families Leave Act to protect the rights of immediate family members who are assisting our soldiers."

–Army National Guard Spouse

"Should I quit my job during his deployment so I can re-apply in 4-6 months and start over at the beginning of my career? Recovering financially upon the servicemember's return means you took 2-steps back instead of getting ahead."

–Air Force Spouse

Sixty percent of military spouses are employed outside the home. While this survey did not specifically ask about their workplace or employer concerns, some told us of employment problems they had encountered. Several asked about the viability of military family leave for the pre-deployment period, during the servicemember's R&R leave, and post-deployment. Some asked for help with educational opportunities and employment searches. Still others related they had quit their job to stay home with their children or that they were considering the feasibility of doing so.

Some families expressed a need for financial counseling. Even with the additional deployment pays and allowances and the combat zone tax advantages, respondents still referenced low pay, running "two households," child care costs, and juggling the

responsibilities of running the household alone as imposing a toll on financial stability. National Guard and Reserve spouses reported that balancing the spouse's career and family responsibilities were the greatest challenge they faced during a deployment. In addition, Guard and Reserve families worry about the servicemember's employment-related issues: the disparity between civilian and military wages, saving their servicemembers' small businesses, and re-gaining civilian employment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

"This has been so far the hardest experience I've ever had to deal with. I expected that. I thought there would be peaks and valleys of happiness and strain. That has not been the case. Even the most wonderful moments are shadowed in the pain that he isn't here. It has been a constant struggle. It isn't getting easier, it isn't getting more comfortable. Not having my husband, my children's father, around has left a hole in this family that can't be filled with routine or time. He is too important to us. His spirit is too much a part of this family. Everyday I tell myself we're one day closer. That is what keeps me going. Regardless of the hurt and sadness that goes with deployment, we believe in him and what he's doing. We know other fathers, other husbands will go home tonight because he's protecting freedom. We just miss him so much, and we want him home."

–Army National Guard Spouse

A Coast Guard crew member from the CGC Bear greets a familiy member after the Bear returned from a 91-day deployment to Africa. USCG photo by PA3 Larry Chambers.

As stated in NMFA's *Serving the Home Front* analysis report, certain elements are essential for a military family support system that works: communication, continuous training, partnerships to enhance family support efforts, and community support. The *Cycles of Deployment* data reinforce those findings, even as they show that both family readiness programs and family challenges have evolved. As NMFA predicted in the 2004 report, the issues of return and reunion and of how families handle multiple deployments necessitate new approaches to family readiness. The most striking conclusion to emerge from this survey is that we were probably mistaken to talk of the "Cycles of Deployment." Families' descriptions of the issues they faced pre-deployment, during deployment, post-deployment, and then gearing up again indicate a spiral and not a cycle. Families never come back to the same place they started. When entering a second or third deployment, they carry the unresolved anxieties and expectations from the last deployment(s) with them along with the skills they gained. While they may have more knowledge of the resources available to them, respondents whose servicemember had deployed multiple times also reported being more fatigued and more concerned about their children and their family relationships.

We did find good news in the survey results. Given the opportunity to vent when answering the question about what families need, many respondents instead praised programs that are working well. They talked of the responsibility families have to seek out the information and support they need and of the strategies they were using to cope during deployment. Almost half reported that support was available to them throughout the pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment cycle. And, in a community known to fear the stigma of seeking mental health care, more than one-half knew counseling services were available and almost 50 percent said they had used or would use counseling services. This percentage increased for families experiencing a second or third deployment.

Based on its observations regarding deployment-related challenges facing uniformed services families today—and supported by the results of the *Cycles of Deployment Survey*—NMFA makes the following recommendations to strengthen military family readiness:

1. **Address return and reunion challenges throughout the deployment cycle:** When survey respondents talked of communication challenges, they often spoke of the need for information that would help with the reintegration of the servicemember with the family after deployment. Families worry about how the reunion will go even as they are worrying about the servicemember's safety in theater. Since most families are not taking advantage of specific return and reunion briefings and activities, family support professionals and commanders must look for innovative ways to help families and servicemembers prepare for the challenge of reintegration. They must also take full advantage of the various post-deployment assessments to gauge not only the servicemember's readjustment to life at home, but also the readjustment of the family.
2. **Direct more resources to support family volunteers:** Even the respondents who praised their family readiness volunteers and support groups noted the need for more resources and "professionals" to support their efforts. Generally, these calls came for the assistance of counselors and administrative support detailed to specific units. The Services are making strides in providing more staffing—whether uniformed or civilian—to support the logistics of family support and conducting family readiness activities. However, survey respondents called for counselors assigned to unit family readiness groups, as well as on-call professionals who would be available to deal with troubled families or the emergency situations currently being thrust on often inadequately trained volunteer family members, who are dealing with the deployment of their own servicemember. Given widely-publicized concerns over family relationships, children, and the mental health of the returning servicemember, NMFA believes more professional support must be directed to the unit level to assist families in meeting these challenges.
3. **Recognize that family time is important:** For many survey respondents, the joy of their servicemembers' return was short-lived because of a high operational tempo at the home installation or the prospect of a subsequent deployment. NMFA understands the demands of the mission on an over-extended force, but encourages Service leaders to give family time a higher priority when planning operational activities, especially for servicemembers who have only been back from deployment for a few months. The impact on family time of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, servicemember attendance at schools, and training activities that take the servicemember away from the home installation must also be considered.
4. **Expand program and information outreach:** While more families are accessing family support services and maintaining touch with their commands and unit family group, a sizeable number still remain outside the fold. They may have expectations about a certain level of support, but are located too far from either the unit or other families to feel a connection to the military. Integrating the "suddenly military" Guard and Reserve family into the support system needs to begin prior to the activation of the servicemember and continue through the reintegration of the servicemember back into the community. It cannot continue to be a one-time use-and-dispose system. We did not ask about the use of Military OneSource (*www.militaryonesource.com*) on this survey, but have in other queries and have generally been pleased that awareness and use of this program is gradually increasing among active duty, National Guard, and Reserve families. It remains the best example of a joint family readiness program that is not dependent on a family's Service or geographic location.
5. **Assist families in developing realistic expectations, and then meet them:** Although challenged by the demands of deployment, families are proud of their servicemember and their own special service to our country. They understand that family support is primarily their personal responsibility, but they expect "The Military" to be involved in that support as well. Some families, especially those of servicemembers deploying for the first time, may expect someone in the military to ensure they have help with even the simplest household tasks. Others may think they have to handle everything on their own—that asking for help would reflect badly on their servicemember. Families need connections

with other family members to show them the ropes. They need accurate information about their benefits and available programs. They need to feel their command cares about them and is interested in keeping them informed. They need their servicemembers to assist them in gaining the tools they need to meet deployment challenges.

6. **Never assume families know what they need to know:** As units continue to deploy, some commanders, professional family support staff, and even family readiness volunteers may assume families do not need the same kind of intensive support they required earlier in the war. Cutting back on pre-deployment briefings because "we've done this all before" short-changes the new spouse or the parents of the new recruit. Experienced family members may find new challenges during a subsequent deployment or find the accumulated stress from multiple deployments creates the need for re-engagement with the family readiness/support group or for accessing different support personnel. Commanders, rear detachment/rear party personnel, family center staff, chaplains, and family readiness volunteers must continually devise innovative ways to reach out to families, gauging what they need and meeting those needs. A consistent level of resources is crucial in giving them the flexibility to create the comprehensive, responsive support system families need in order to succeed in the face of repeated deployments.

Appendix

Cycles of Deployment Survey

(as posted on the NMFA website: April through September, 2005)

Since Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom have begun, our servicemembers have experienced deployments into combat zones, longer work hours, and intensive training schedules and military families have continued to support the commitment to their servicemember.

NMFA wants to know what your family is experiencing as cycles of deployment, longer work hours and rigorous training programs continue. Please take a moment to answer the following questions regarding you and your family's experiences.

Deployment / Mobilization

1. How many times has the servicemember been deployed or mobilized since January 2003?
- ❑ None
- ❑ Once
- ❑ Twice
- ❑ Three times
- ❑ More than three times

2. What is the total length of time the servicemember has been deployed or mobilized since January 2003?
- ❑ 3 months or less
- ❑ 4-6 months
- ❑ 7-12 months
- ❑ 13-18 months
- ❑ 19-24 months
- ❑ More than 24 months

3. Is the servicemember currently deployed?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

4. If the servicemember is not currently deployed, when did the servicemember return from the most recent deployment?
- ❑ 0-3 months
- ❑ 4-6 months
- ❑ 7-12 months
- ❑ More than one year
- ❑ Not Applicable

5. Has a date or time frame been set for the servicemember's next deployment?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Don't Know
- ❑ Not Applicable

6. When the servicemember last deployed, how did the servicemember deploy or mobilize:
- ❑ With a platoon, unit, company, battalion
- ❑ As a "onsie" or "twosie" attached to a different unit or company
- ❑ After the platoon, unit, company, battalion had deployed/mobilized as a group
- ❑ Not Applicable

7. When did you have contact with the unit or unit volunteer group (check all that apply):
- ❑ Before the deployment/mobilization
- ❑ During the deployment/mobilization
- ❑ After the deployment/mobilization
- ❑ No contact from the unit or volunteer group
- ❑ Chose not to have contact with the unit or volunteer group
- ❑ Not applicable

8. At what point during the deployment did your family feel the greatest stress?
- ❑ Upon notification of impending deployment
- ❑ Upon departure of deployment
- ❑ In the beginning of the deployment
- ❑ During the middle of the deployment
- ❑ At the end of the deployment
- ❑ Not Applicable

9. What is/was the greatest challenge for your family during deployment or mobilization? (check all that apply)
- ❑ Communication with servicemember
- ❑ Financial challenges
- ❑ Health challenges (physical, mental or emotional)
- ❑ Health insurance/TRICARE changes
- ❑ Balancing spouse's career and family responsibilities
- ❑ Challenges with children
- ❑ Concern for servicemember's safety
- ❑ None
- ❑ Other
- ❑ Not Applicable

10. If your servicemember has deployed more than once since January 2003, rate your ability to deal with repeated deployments.
- ❑ I am better able to deal with subsequent deployments
- ❑ I have not noticed any change in my ability to deal with subsequent deployments
- ❑ It's harder for me to deal with subsequent deployments
- ❑ Not Applicable

Reunion

11. What is/was the best resource when preparing for the reunion with the servicemember?
- ❑ Participated in a formal reunion program
- ❑ Talked with someone who had been through reunion before
- ❑ Talked with a professional (chaplain, counselor, etc)
- ❑ Relied on past personal experience
- ❑ Did nothing special

12. How prepared did you feel your family is/was for reunion before the servicemember returned?
- ❑ Excellent
- ❑ Very Good
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Fair
- ❑ Unacceptable

13. How prepared did you feel your family is/was for reunion after the servicemember returned?
- ❑ Excellent
- ❑ Very Good
- ❑ Good
- ❑ Fair
- ❑ Not at all prepared

14. At what point after the reunion did your family feel the greatest stress?
- ❑ 0-3 months
- ❑ 4-6 months
- ❑ 7-9 months
- ❑ 10-12 months
- ❑ Over 12 months

15. What is/was the greatest challenge for your family after the reunion? (check all that apply)
- ❑ Concern of deploying/mobilizing again
- ❑ Longer work hours/change in unit
- ❑ Relocated to new area
- ❑ Financial challenges
- ❑ Balancing spouse's career and family responsibilities
- ❑ Challenges with children or family
- ❑ Health of family members (physical, mental or emotional)
- ❑ Health of servicemember (physical, mental or emotional)
- ❑ Health insurance/TRICARE changes
- ❑ None
- ❑ Other

Day-to-Day Challenges

16. Are counseling services available for your family within a reasonable distance?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Don't know

17. Would your family use or has anyone in your family used counseling services?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Don't know

18. If you did use counseling services, were they helpful?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ Not Applicable

19. What support services are offered for families whose servicemembers are not deployed to assist them in dealing with the stresses of military life, to include: high operations tempo, servicemember training in preparation for deployment, and return and reunion issues that emerge months after the servicemember's return?
- ❑ No-cost child care
- ❑ Ongoing family readiness group activities
- ❑ Family center programs
- ❑ Chaplains' programs
- ❑ Counseling
- ❑ Special support activities offered by organizations in surrounding civilian community
- ❑ Nothing offered beyond regular programs open to all families
- ❑ Other

20. Choose the one that best describes the level of support your family has received:
- ❑ Support available throughout the pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment
- ❑ Support available throughout the pre-deployment phase only
- ❑ Support available throughout the deployment phase only
- ❑ Support available throughout the post-deployment phase only
- ❑ Support available throughout the first deployment, but not at the same level on continuous deployments
- ❑ No support is/was available

21. What do you feel is needed for military families in order for them to continue to be successful before, during, and after the deployment cycles?

22. Would be willing for us to contact you with further questions about your family's deployment experience?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

23. If you would like to be contacted, please provide your email address

24. Comments

Demographic Information

25. What is YOUR affiliation to the military?
- ❑ National Guard (activated or not activated)
- ❑ Reserve
- ❑ Active Duty
- ❑ Spouse of National Guard
- ❑ Spouse of Reserves
- ❑ Spouse of Active Duty
- ❑ Parent of servicemember
- ❑ Civilian or government employee
- ❑ Retired
- ❑ Other

26. With what branch of uniformed service is the servicemember affiliated?
- ❑ Army
- ❑ Navy
- ❑ Air Force
- ❑ Marine Corps
- ❑ Coast Guard
- ❑ NOAA
- ❑ Public Health Service

27. How many years has the servicemember been in service?
- ❑ 0-4 years
- ❑ 5-10 years
- ❑ 11-15 years
- ❑ 16-20 years
- ❑ 20+ years

28. What rank category is the servicemember?
- ❑ E1-E4
- ❑ E5-E7
- ❑ E8-E9
- ❑ W1-W4
- ❑ 01-03
- ❑ 04-06
- ❑ 07-010

29. What is YOUR age category?
- ❑ 18-25
- ❑ 26-35
- ❑ 36-45
- ❑ 46-55
- ❑ 55+

30. Do you have dependent children?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

The National Military Family Association is the only national organization whose sole focus is the military family and whose goal is to influence the development and implementation of policies that will improve the lives of the families of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. For more than 35 years, its staff and volunteers, comprised mostly of military family members, have built a reputation for being the leading experts on military family issues. Visit *www.nmfa.org* for more information.

NMFA thanks DefenseWeb Technologies, whose support made the printing of this report possible.

DefenseWeb Technologies, Inc. *(www.defenseweb.com)* provides customized software solutions including web portals, electronic screening tools, case management systems, and online training systems to address the needs of military servicemembers and their families.

The company's solutions are used by all branches of the U.S. military to make health and family programs more effective, more efficient, and less expensive. Recently, DefenseWeb developed the Army's Virtual Family Readiness Group (vFRG), an online community portal to help families communicate and stay connected to regional support services, improving quality of life and military readiness.

National Military Family Association
2500 N Van Dorn St., Ste. 102, Alexandria, VA 22302
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July 2004

NMFA
National Military Family Association

Serving the Home Front:

An Analysis of Military Family Support from September 11, 2001 through March 31, 2004

Foreword

July, 2004

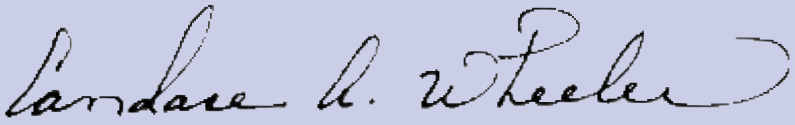
The National Military Family Association (NMFA) is a private, nonprofit organization serving the families of the seven uniformed services. Its primarily volunteer staff is made up of military family members, active duty and retired personnel, and civilians who care about military families. We understand the unique dynamics of the uniformed services families because we live that lifestyle.

This year the National Military Family Association celebrates 35 years of serving military families. NMFA has been honored to be the "Voice for Military Families" and will proudly continue to be that voice. Through our mission of education, information, and advocacy, we have strengthened and empowered military families. That is why we have adopted the motto "Strong Families, Strong Force" for our 35th anniversary year.

At NMFA we believe that to obtain a strong military force, we must have strong military families. It is especially fitting during this anniversary year that NMFA has conducted a family support analysis project. The analysis team, all military family members, examined issues of concern to military families and the availability of support services. This report summarizes the findings of the analysis team.

Uniformed service families all over the world serve on the home front to make their communities a better place. They serve their country proudly just as their servicemembers do. That is why we feel very strongly that the recommendations contained in this report should be adopted to further strengthen our families, our force, and our nation.

Sincerely,



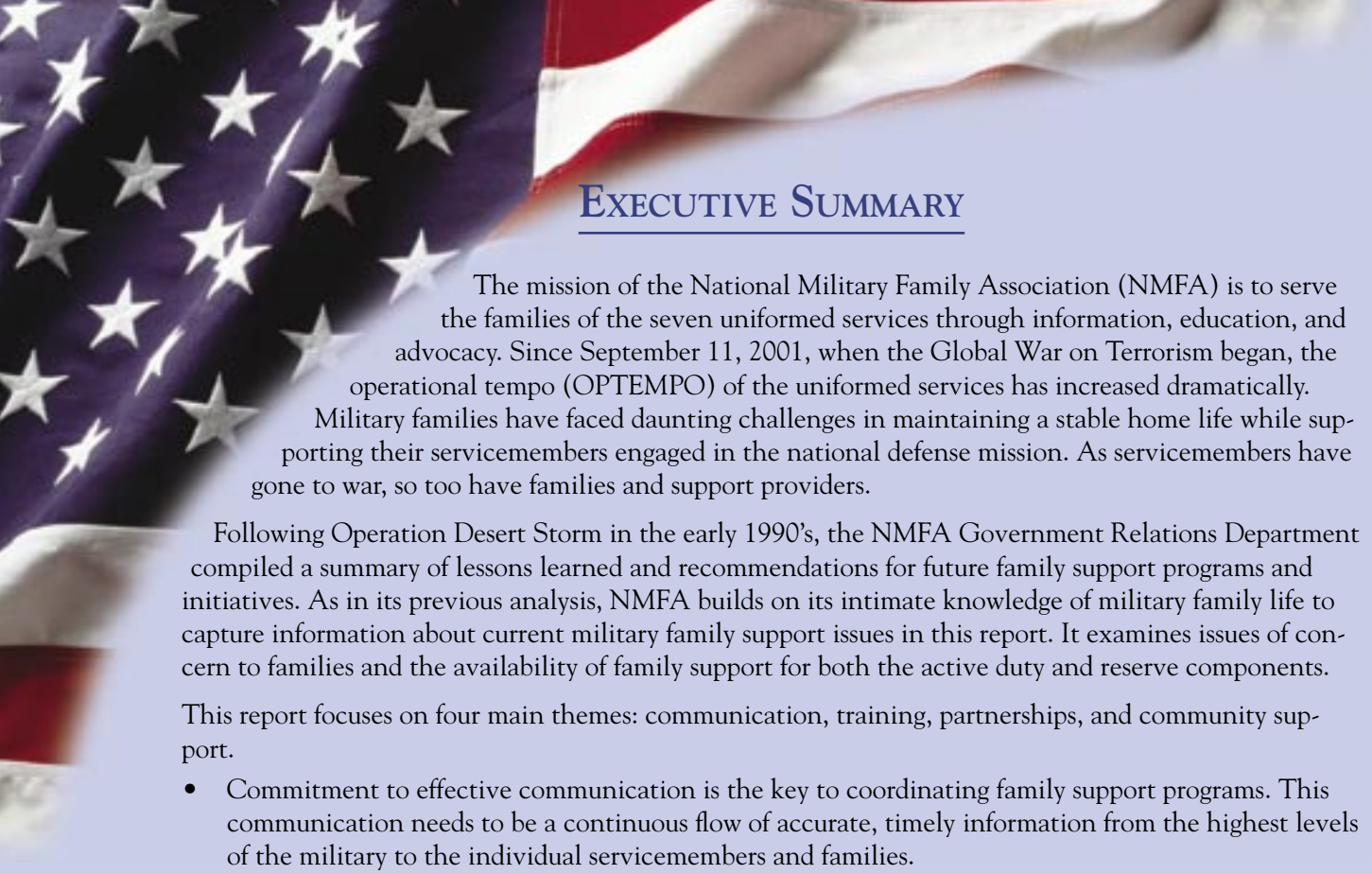
Candace A. Wheeler

NMFA President

Acknowledgment

NMFA extends its heartfelt thanks to those who contributed to this project, especially to all of the military families serving the home front. Without you, this report would not have been possible.

All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.



Executive Summary

The mission of the National Military Family Association (NMFA) is to serve the families of the seven uniformed services through information, education, and advocacy. Since September 11, 2001, when the Global War on Terrorism began, the operational tempo (OPTEMPO) of the uniformed services has increased dramatically. Military families have faced daunting challenges in maintaining a stable home life while supporting their servicemembers engaged in the national defense mission. As servicemembers have gone to war, so too have families and support providers.

Following Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990's, the NMFA Government Relations Department compiled a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for future family support programs and initiatives. As in its previous analysis, NMFA builds on its intimate knowledge of military family life to capture information about current military family support issues in this report. It examines issues of concern to families and the availability of family support for both the active duty and reserve components.

This report focuses on four main themes: communication, training, partnerships, and community support.

- Commitment to effective communication is the key to coordinating family support programs. This communication needs to be a continuous flow of accurate, timely information from the highest levels of the military to the individual servicemembers and families.
- Training is a continuous step in ensuring that programs are working and that services are consistent and utilized. There are many people offering wonderful programs, but the challenge lies in reaching the families who need them.
- The development and continuation of partnerships are central to ensuring an overall successful effort to help military families. These partnerships include military to military, military to community, and military to employers.
- Finally, community support has helped fill the gaps in military family support services. Military families are encouraged by and grateful for the efforts of their fellow citizens.

Selected issue discussions highlight special areas of concern and responses to those concerns. These issues—TRICARE, the need for preventive mental health services, access to affordable child care, and communication innovations through the "One Source" employee assistance program—point the way to further research and/or additional support activities.

The report also identifies some underlying themes related to transforming military family support services, expectations, and the importance of command involvement.

- The expectations of servicemembers, family members, and "the military" all need to be established and communicated. Expectations of families regarding support in general should mesh with the reality of support services and programs that can be provided. Families must maintain some sense of responsibility for their own readiness.
- The importance of command involvement in all facets of family readiness cannot be emphasized enough. This includes not just unit commanders, but also installation and headquarters command levels.
- Military families understand that the Global War on Terrorism will entail a long commitment for them and their servicemembers. As the military services are transformed to meet the unexpected and uncertain missions of this war, all aspects of family support need to be transformed as well.

As the third anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack approaches, the resiliency of military families remains strong. However, according to one military spouse, "the normal of what [we] used to know is no more." The strength of military families serving on the home front to endure this changed environment is wearing down. In addition to dealing with routine experiences of military life, such as relocating, achieving consistency in their children's education or seeking employment opportunities

for spouses, military families face even more unique challenges due to the ongoing high OPTEMPO. As servicemembers deploy more frequently, for longer periods of time and at unpredictable intervals, it is essential that military families have a comprehensive, responsive, and flexible system of support to prepare and sustain them.

Communication

The first essential component of a family support system is effective communication to enhance the sharing of information and outreach to military families. Families need realistic expectations about the frequency and type of communication they will have with the deployed servicemember. Communication expectations must also be established and information easily and openly exchanged between the official chain of command and families. Processes of communication should include families geographically dispersed from the servicemember's unit, as well as families of servicemembers augmented to another unit or Service. When in place, institutional means of raising family support issues can heighten the Service leadership's awareness of concerns and lead to solutions at all levels. Effective and easy to use websites should be available to all family members; volunteer efforts to provide input to these sites should be facilitated. Outreach initiatives are needed to raise awareness among all military families of available support programs and services designed to enable them to thrive during a higher pace of military operations.

Key communication recommendations

- Establish realistic expectations regarding communication both between the servicemember and family and the command and families prior to deployment.
- Ensure that command responsibility includes geographically dispersed families and families of augmented servicemembers in the unit communication process.
- Implement a Service-wide, institutional means of raising family readiness and deployment issues from the ground level up through the headquarters level and facilitate Service solutions to problems at various levels.
- Provide a far-reaching system to include extended family members in unit communications.
- Create and maintain Service, installation and unit websites that are user-friendly and contain timely and accurate information.
- Recognize the importance of and facilitate unit volunteer efforts to reach out to family members. Assign a point of contact for posting unit volunteer information on installation and/or unit websites instead of spending additional resources for off-line websites.
- Develop a Department of Defense (DoD)-wide comprehensive marketing outreach plan to make all military families aware of available support services, regardless of their Service affiliation or proximity to an installation.
- Continue efforts to educate families about TRICARE benefits and rules.
- Ensure continuity and accessibility of medical care, especially for Guard and Reserve families.

Training

Standardized and continuous training throughout the military family support system is the second element in this comprehensive effort to provide families with the help they need during more frequent and lengthier deployments. Formal training will enable unit commanders, rear parties, and volunteers to work together more effectively to make the support system of true benefit to military families. Servicemembers must be trained by the command to make family readiness a priority. Required Family Care Plans should be agreeable to all involved and commanders held accountable for their implementation, as well as all other aspects of family readiness. Military family support providers must tailor programs and services to meet changing needs of families as servicemembers return and families reunite. They should adapt the location and hours of support programs and services to be accessible for the families they serve. Individuals involved with children need training to recognize and support their deployment-related needs. All individuals involved with the Guard and Reserve must know of rights, benefits and entitlements and how

to find information throughout the stages of mobilization and deployment. Families and servicemembers need information to know when to seek professional help and, when needed, preventive, confidential, and robust counseling must also be easily accessible.

Key training recommendations

- Require formalized training of unit commanders, rear party personnel and unit volunteers together so all receive the same core information, have similar expectations, and understand the role of each party.
- Train servicemembers that family readiness is part of servicemember readiness.
- Require servicemember Family Care Plans to be reasonable, workable, and agreeable to the parties named as family care providers.
- Enforce measures of command accountability to make the entire concept of family readiness work well.
- Provide robust return, reunion and reintegration programs for servicemembers and families as the nature and length of deployments continue to change.
- Ensure military family support providers are trained to adapt support service location and hours so they are most accessible to the families they serve.
- Furnish training to parents, school personnel, and child care providers about ways to help children cope, especially with longer deployments and repeated deployments. Include ways that local military entities and units at installations can assist.
- Continuously train all entities involved with the Guard and Reserve to know rights, benefits, and entitlements from mobilization through demobilization.
- Provide more robust, preventive counseling services for servicemembers and families, especially children. Train servicemembers and families to know when to seek professional help related to their circumstances. Ensure that commanders encourage participation in these services without danger to the servicemember's career.
- Expand child care services to meet the changing needs of families and to facilitate their participation in training opportunities. These may include hourly care, respite care, care for children with special needs or mild illnesses, evening care, weekend care, or continuous care under certain circumstances.

Partnerships

Effective partnerships, the third element in a military family support system, must be replicated across the board to implement an all-encompassing and responsive effort by military and community agencies and organizations to benefit military families. Joint accessibility and consistency of programs is needed and successful working programs should be emulated to help families during deployments. Partnerships between the military, installation agencies, and civilian entities must be enhanced to ensure the acceptance of powers of attorney as families access services. By working together, military public affairs officials and local media outlets can make families aware of available programs and services. The sharing of best practices and knowledge can strengthen the essential relationships between the command, parents, school officials, and community agencies necessary to meet the changing needs of military children. More partnerships between military and community religious leaders will further sustain servicemembers and families during all phases of deployments. Robust partnerships between the military and employers must also continue to facilitate understanding and support of Guard and Reserve members and families.

Key partnership recommendations

- Create more partnerships to enhance joint accessibility to and consistency of military family support programs and services, regardless of geographic location.
- Expand upon the model provided at the DoD headquarters level through the Joint Family Readiness Working Group to implement joint groups at state and installation levels.

- Enforce the requirement for One Source to provide feedback to military family support providers and commanders on trends in services requested by family members. Ensure installations and units provide updated information on available services to One Source on a regular basis.
- Form partnerships between the military, agencies on the installation, and civilian entities to ensure powers of attorney completed by military legal authorities are accepted.
- Develop working relationships between military public affairs and local media outlets to reach the widest audience possible about services available to families, common challenges families face and how to solve issues as they arise.
- Increase partnerships between command, parents, and school officials to best serve the changing needs of military children regardless of geographic location. Encourage more military-to-school and school-to-school partnerships to share expertise and best practices.
- Continue to cultivate partnerships with local community services to support child and youth needs especially during times of high OPTEMPO.
- Encourage expanded programs between the military and community religious leaders to support all servicemembers and families during all phases of mobilization and deployment.
- Establish additional support programs to facilitate understanding of and support between employers and Guard and Reserve members and families.

Community Support

The broad effort to coordinate programs and services for military families must also include harnessing community goodwill and support on a global level. A continuous process of communicating between military and community leaders will enhance programs available through military family support providers. State and local government leaders must share information on supporting military families. Community support efforts must be funneled through a consolidated channel at installations to coordinate available offers of support and needs of families and avoid duplication of efforts. Community support efforts are the final piece in the comprehensive system of reaching out and helping families.

Key community support recommendations

- Recognize the importance of community support and encourage a continued commitment between military and community leaders to provide for the changing needs of military families.
- Encourage state and local government leaders to network and share programs that benefit military families.
- Appoint installation points of contact to coordinate and market available community support.

Military families understand and are prepared for particular uncertainties. To deal with uncertainties that go beyond their frame of reference, families need additional help. A comprehensive, responsive support system will ensure the success of military families as they continue to face the unique challenges involved with the high pace of military operations.

Follow-on analysis is needed

This report provides a snapshot of military family support from September 11, 2001 to March 31, 2004. While this broad view provides many insights into the needs of families and the responses of military and civilian agencies and organizations to meet those needs, the necessity for further research in at least two distinct areas becomes apparent. Further study is required to pinpoint the needs of children during times of high OPTEMPO, to determine the tools parents need to support their children, and to help children cope in the best ways possible. More research is also needed on the return of servicemembers from deployment and the reunion and reintegration of families. This includes the long-term effects of and the best ways to assist families during these phases, especially during and after repeated deployments.

Introduction

Since September 11, 2001 military operational tempo (OPTEMPO) across the Services has increased dramatically. This increase has culminated in numerous deployments and longer work hours preparing for and supporting the Global War on Terrorism. Just as the Services have gone to war, so too have military families and support services "gone to war."

A *New Social Compact* outlines the current quality of life framework for the Department of Defense (DoD). It states, "The partnership between the American people and the noble warfighters and their families is built on a tacit agreement that families as well as the service member contribute immeasurably to the readiness and strength of the American military."[1] Servicemembers and their families have seen their support by the American people increase. The outpouring of community spirit, good will, and resources have been very encouraging, but alone they do not meet the needs of every military family.

> "We are not disgruntled.
> This is our duty,
> but it's hard on the family."
> —Interview with a military spouse

In its firm commitment to addressing the needs of families from the uniformed services, the National Military Family Association (NMFA) assembled a Family Support Analysis Team to assess the status of military family support today. The analysis encompassed several areas. The first of these areas included the identification of issues military families have faced since September 11, 2001. The support and programs available to military families were also studied and the best practices of these programs and services examined in relation to how they met the needs families faced. In addition, the analysis investigated gaps in military family support and the role of communities and community agencies in helping to fill those holes.

Photo courtesy of US Navy

Since January 2004, the NMFA analysis team:

- Conducted an online survey generating input from over 2,500 respondents.
- Facilitated fourteen active and reserve component focus group discussions with military families across the United States and in Germany. Discussions were held with four Army, two Navy, two Air Force, two Marine Corps, two Coast Guard and two joint family groups.
- Personally interviewed or gained questionnaire feedback from more than one hundred Service headquarters level personnel and installation family support staff.
- Documented thousands of pages of anecdotal information from periodical resources.
- Cataloged information from Congressional testimony, military briefings, and websites.

The NMFA analysis captured the renegotiation of expectations and needs of military families and military family support providers in relation to the sustained higher military OPTEMPO. The combined research provided NMFA with a comprehensive picture of the issues military families have faced and are facing, the programs and services that have helped families solve challenges and what might be needed for the future.

In drawing conclusions regarding military family support, it is important to understand the demographic profile of the military on the whole, as well as the demographics of the specific military families involved in the research process. According to 2002 data, the number of military personnel totals 2,638,616. Of this number:

- 61.4% are active duty members and 38.6% are members of the Selected Reserve.
- 78.8% of active duty servicemembers and 58.4% of the Selected Reserve are 35 years old or younger.

[1] Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), *A New Social Compact: A Reciprocal Partnership Between the Department of Defense, Service Members and Families*. July 2002, p. 6.

- More than half (51.7%) of both active duty and Selected Reserve servicemembers are married.
- Spouses under the age of 30 comprise 48.4% of active duty spouses while 44.5% of Selected Reserve spouses are under the age of 35.[2]

NMFA conducted its online Survey of Support for Military Families from February 1, 2004 through March 31, 2004. Demographic data from the combined 2,654 survey and focus group participants provides a fair representation of military families in relation to the demographic profile of military families on the whole. NMFA survey and focus group demographic results are included in graphs 1 through 9 on the following page.

NMFA survey and focus group research shows that many programs and services are in place to help military families. These programs and services, however, are inconsistent in meeting families' needs. Where support programs are working, they do so for several reasons:

- **A total commitment to communication is embraced as the key to coordinating family support programs.** Communication must be a continuous flow of accurate, timely information between all parties involved in military family support, from the highest levels of the military to the individual families. Marketing efforts should reach out to families wherever they are located.
- **The training of all individuals involved with military family support is a continuous step in ensuring programs are working and services are consistent and utilized.** The command institutionalizes the priority for family support and then instills that priority in all other links in the official chain of communication. Training military family support providers to tailor their programs to meet the needs of families occurs parallel to the training of commanders to personify this ideal. Servicemembers must also be trained to understand the importance of family readiness. Training all of these entities to work together will provide military families the support they need when they need it the most.
- **Strong partnerships help military families face unique issues that arise due to deployments.** As the military Services look within themselves and cooperate to seek out collaborative opportunities in the community and with employers, the benefit to military families grows exponentially.
- **The outpouring of community spirit, goodwill, and resources fills critical gaps for family support needs during times of deployment.** Despite the best intentions of military family support services, it is not possible for them to anticipate every unique situation and meet all of the needs of every family. Communities fill in the gaps for family support needs.

All these factors must work in harmony for the benefit of military families. The effectiveness of this comprehensive coordination of efforts will dictate the ability of military families to navigate and overcome challenges as they continue to face new levels of uncertainty.

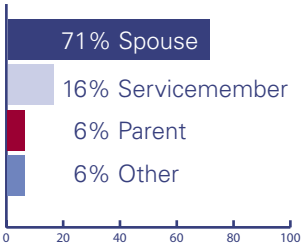
Several overarching themes and trends can consistently be seen throughout the NMFA analysis. These themes include:

- Expectations of all family members regarding support in general must mesh with the reality of support services and programs that can be provided. Families must maintain some sense of responsibility for their own readiness.
- Command involvement at all levels and in all facets of family readiness is key to ensuring the entire system is of maximum benefit to military families.
- As the military continues to transform to meet unexpected and uncertain missions, the components of military family support must also change to meet the evolving needs of families.

[2] Military Family Resource Center, *2002 Demographics Profile of the Military Community*. Arlington, VA, 2003, pp. 2, 20, 37, 68, 72, 87.

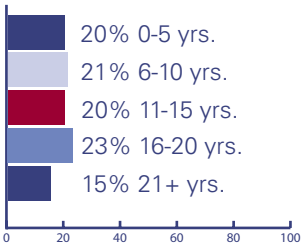
NMFA Survey Demographics

Affiliation to the Military



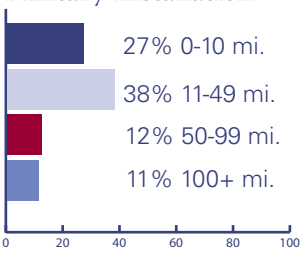
71% of the respondents were military spouses.

Years of Service



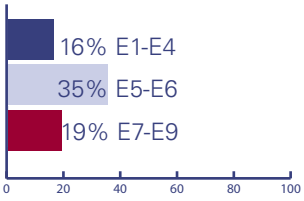
41% of respondents have 10 years or less in service.

Distance from Nearest Military Installation

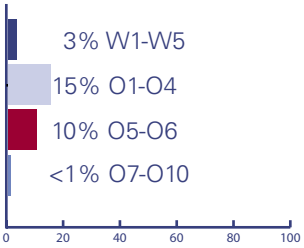


78% of respondents DO NOT live on an installation.

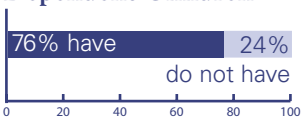
Servicemember's Rank: Enlisted



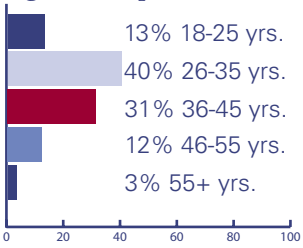
Servicemember's Rank: Officer



Dependent Children

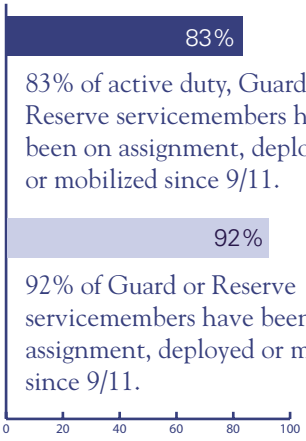


Age of Respondents

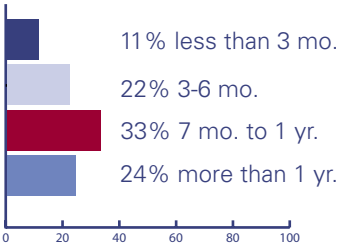


53% of respondents are 35 years of age or younger.

Has the servicemember been on assignment, deployed or mobilized at least once since 9/11? *



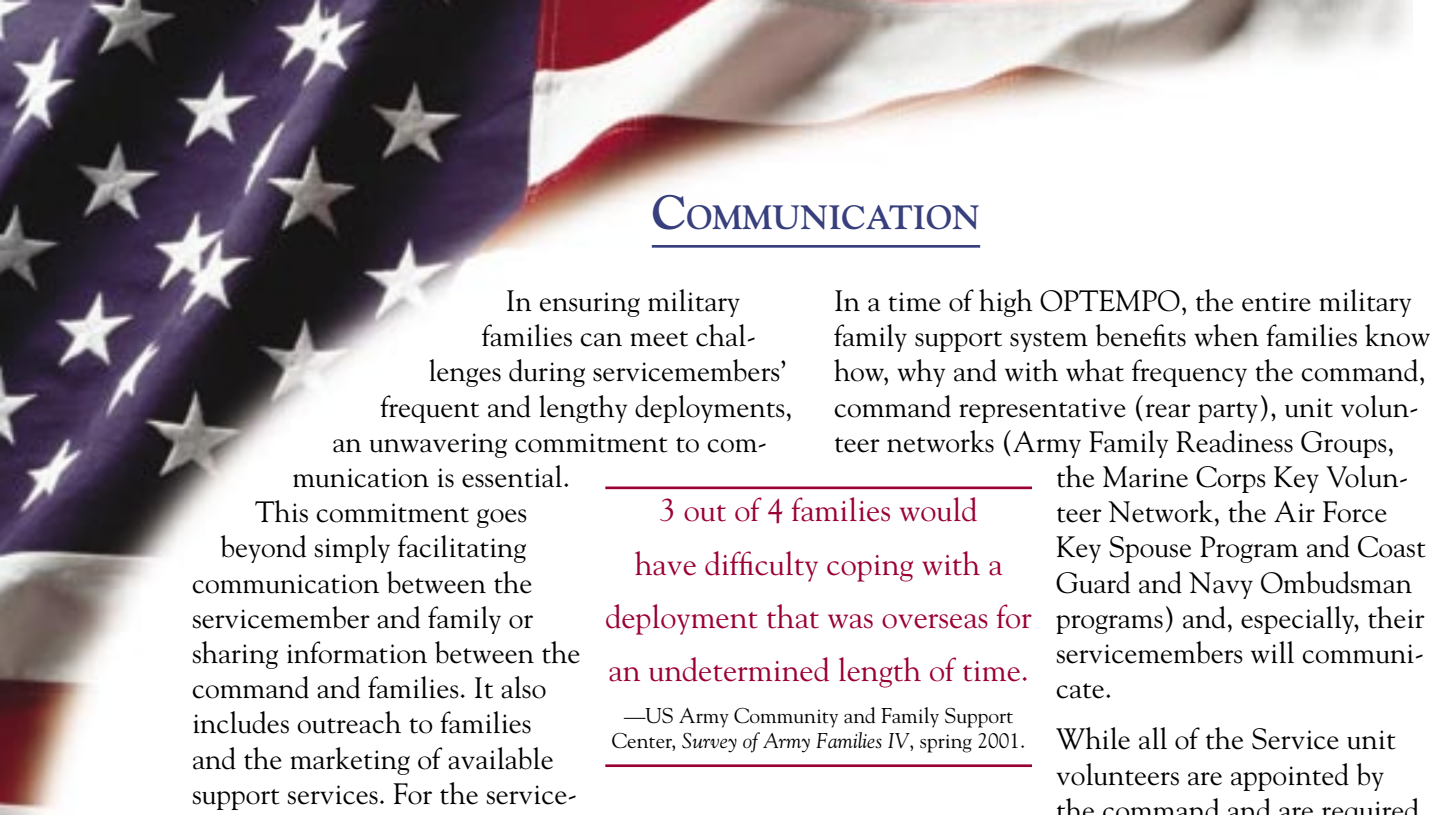
Total Time Servicemember has been on assignment, deployed or mobilized since 9/11 *



57% of respondents stated servicemember has been mobilized or deployed for more than 7 months.

*Source: Combined demographics from the NMFA online Family Support Survey only.

Source: Combined demographics from the NMFA online Family Support Survey and Focus Groups conducted Feb-Mar 2004.



Communication

In ensuring military families can meet challenges during servicemembers' frequent and lengthy deployments, an unwavering commitment to communication is essential.

This commitment goes beyond simply facilitating communication between the servicemember and family or sharing information between the command and families. It also includes outreach to families and the marketing of available support services. For the servicemembers down range, being able to stay in touch with family and friends at home can make or break their day. So too the expectations about the form and frequency of communications, the interaction between all parties, and the level of outreach from the command and family support providers can make or break the experience for the military family on the home front.

> 3 out of 4 families would have difficulty coping with a deployment that was overseas for an undetermined length of time.
>
> —US Army Community and Family Support Center, *Survey of Army Families IV*, spring 2001.

Critical elements of essential communication include:

- Establishing realistic expectations of the type and frequency of communication between the deployed servicemember and the family.
- Establishing communications expectations between military families and military family support providers.
- Developing and maintaining an open flow of information between all parties involved in military family support.
- Shifting marketing efforts to reach military families where they are located and through the information avenues families are most inclined to use.

Establishing realistic communication expectations

Establishing realistic expectations regarding communication can be crucial for military families, especially during a mobilization and/or deployment.

In a time of high OPTEMPO, the entire military family support system benefits when families know how, why and with what frequency the command, command representative (rear party), unit volunteer networks (Army Family Readiness Groups, the Marine Corps Key Volunteer Network, the Air Force Key Spouse Program and Coast Guard and Navy Ombudsman programs) and, especially, their servicemembers will communicate.

While all of the Service unit volunteers are appointed by the command and are required to be sources of official information and referrals, most go beyond their duties as outlined by policy. These "above and beyond" efforts sometimes take shape in the way unit volunteers maintain contact with families aside from passing along official information or serving as a source of support for family members experiencing a casualty situation. Families, however, need to understand the basic purpose of unit volunteers is to relay information from the command. It is equally important for families to know what to expect about how, why, and how often unit volunteers will communicate with them. To gain a realistic picture of the total communication process, both unit volunteers and families must understand the roles of all involved entities in ensuring effective communication.

Not only do families need to know from whom they will be hearing and under what circumstances, they also need to know where they can turn first for answers in the official chain of communication. The command, rear party and unit volunteer networks must operate under a certain

> Unit Volunteer Networks—
> Army Family Readiness Groups
> the Marine Corps Key Volunteer Network
> the Air Force Key Spouse Program
> and the Coast Guard and Navy Ombudsman Programs

open door policy and be prepared when family members seek information or assistance. Just as it is essential for families to establish realistic perceptions about communications, it is equally important for these official links in the communication chain to expect that families will have questions and concerns and be prepared to address issues as they arise.

For Guard and Reserve families, or active duty family members who are new to the military or unfamiliar with deployments, establishing realistic expectations regarding communication can be especially challenging. Experienced military families know there is often a difference between how communications should work and how they actually do work during military operations. Because they are only starting their overwhelming education process on the military lifestyle, family members new to the military have not yet gained the perspective that provides insight about this difference. In general, these families have to work even harder to know what they do not know before gaining a frame of reference regarding communications.

> "Media parked themselves outside of family homes and waited for them to come out to say 'Did you hear…?'"
>
> —Interview with a military spouse

A mismatch of expectations and reality regarding communications between servicemembers and families was the cause of much unease during deployments for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Some military spouses accustomed to instant communication with their deployed servicemembers through email, cell phones and instant messaging found the reality of unpredictable contact caused much heart-wrenching concern. Even as communication capabilities improved overseas, many families still held unrealistic expectations regarding communication with the servicemember. One spouse, for example, noted that after she began hearing from her servicemember every few days she became sick with worry and started wondering about the casualty notification process whenever lines of communication were down. Teaching families to expect the unexpected regarding communication with the servicemember can help reduce or eliminate high levels of anxiety while the servicemember is away.

> "Email is a double edged sword, when it works it is great but when it doesn't work it causes stress."
>
> —Interview with a military spouse

Similarly, family members often experience greater levels of anxiety because of the instant access to information through the 24-hour-a-day media coverage of military missions. Seeing an embedded reporter talk to someone from the servicemember's unit half a world away in real time creates expectations among family members that communication from the command, rear party or unit volunteer network will also be instantaneous. Military family members in the NMFA survey and focus groups expressed a high level of frustration about hearing particular information on the location, length of mobilization or deployment of a specific unit, ship, or group through media reports and then having to wait hours, sometimes longer than a day, to hear the same information through the official chain of communication. Commanders, family support providers, and unit volunteers can greatly reduce levels of stress and help families achieve a framework for normalcy if, from the beginning, they clarify expectations by explaining that the media has a story to sell, that families can and should inquire about the information being presented in the media, and that the command will communicate as quickly and accurately as possible.

One unanticipated issue regarding communication expectations involved extended family members of servicemembers. Parents, siblings, and others close to servicemembers often do not know where they can get answers and information about the servicemember. Once pointed toward the command or installation, they expect to access the answers they seek. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, commands, rear parties, and unit volunteer networks did not necessarily expect to include other family members in communications normally available to spouses. However, extended family member inquiries at times overwhelmed the chain of official communication. As Service leadership implemented ad hoc systems to accommodate communication with

extended family members, they sometimes greatly taxed unit volunteer networks.

Recognizing the expectation among some extended family members that they should be included in unit communications, the 1st Marine Division went beyond the simple posting of websites and unit toll free numbers by implementing an Extended Family Member Program. As Marines returned to Iraq in early 2004, they received information cards to send to as many extended family members as they wished with the website address for their unit, unit hotline telephone numbers and contact information for the rear party. This response to the expectation that extended family members will want information about the servicemember is an example of a broad-based solution to an unanticipated communication expectation issue. It also recognizes that, ultimately, it is the servicemember's responsibility to ensure that the family members he or she wants to be included in unit communications are provided with the information to do so.

> "We find ourselves in the AFAP 20th year, supporting an Army at war. At no time in my recent memory has a program like AFAP been more important to the overall success of our Army."
>
> —General George W. Casey, Vice Chief of Staff, USA, *The 2003 AFAP Conference Report*

Communication between all levels

Communication connections between all levels of family support providers, servicemembers, and family members must be clear and open. Just as DoD must communicate policy information, so must families be able to communicate whether policies and programs work and how they can work better. Ensuring communication channels between all levels are open and operational will help families successfully navigate challenges.

A clear example of communication working between all levels to benefit families can be seen in the annual Army Family Action Plan (AFAP). AFAP has been instrumental in pinpointing and monitoring the issues of well-being for the Army community for more than twenty years. It institutionalizes a complete circle of information between active duty and reserve component servicemembers, families, retirees, Army civilian employees, and Army leadership. This information, in part, is used to ensure quality of life programs and policies are in place and meeting the needs of servicemembers and families. The Army Family Action Plan allows for issues to be brought up annually at the local installation level and raised to the appropriate level for resolution. Since the program started in 1983 no less than 82 changes have been made to legislation, 130 revisions made to policy and regulations, and 140 programs or services improved, partially as a result of the Army Family Action Plan.[3]

The November 2003 Army-wide AFAP Conference followed the format of previous conferences by tasking its work groups with sifting through issues raised from the various Army commands, identifying the most important, and making recommendations for change. The conference departed from its traditional format, however, when the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army asked delegates to provide input on specific deployment-related issues. Delegates raised concerns that rear detachment personnel were not family-friendly, were apathetic, or did not know of available services and programs. They reported that units lacked accurate redeployment schedules and that family member participation in pre-deployment and preparedness processes was inadequate. Some Soldiers who made permanent change of station moves deployed before their families were settled. Guard and Reserve delegates reported that many reserve component members experienced pay problems upon activation. By adding the inquiry regarding deployment challenges, the institutional structure of AFAP adapted to facilitate communication of the needs of Army families to Army leadership in a timely manner. With a vehicle such as AFAP in place to communicate between all levels, the Army has the mechanism to adjust policies and programs to meet the changing needs of families.

Broad-based communication connections are especially critical to the support of families of servicemembers who deploy individually as augmentees to

[3] *The 2003 Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) Conference Report.*

other units or Services, with a headquarters staff, or in another support function. Service policies may outline the complicated process in determining the commanding authority over the servicemember attached to a different unit or Service, but do not always make clear who is responsible for communicating with families. This process is complicated even at the highest levels; focus group discussions reveal that unit communication with families of unit augmentees often falls apart or does not exist. Command and larger unit headquarters-level families, although sometimes involved in advising unit volunteer networks, are not necessarily included in the formal communication structure. These families are left floundering for information, including predeployment and return and reunion information, and end up struggling to seek out links of official communications for themselves. Ensuring communication processes are in place at all levels, with all parties understanding their responsibilities, will go a long way in alleviating challenges these particular military families face during deployments.

> "The families who tend to be involved, come to meetings, KNOW what is going on, what is out there. It is really difficult to get to the families who don't want to be involved or don't know how to be involved."
>
> —Interview with a military spouse

Communication as outreach

The easy and open exchange of information between all levels works in conjunction with successful practices to reach out to families and include them in available support services. Of the NMFA survey respondents who indicated they used family support services, 72% responded favorably to their experiences. Despite the availability and effectiveness of these programs to families who use them, too many programs are not used to the degree they should be because not enough families know about them or recognize their value. Consequently, military family support providers must expand their efforts to direct awareness about available support services to where military families actually reside and where they turn to get their information.

One disconnect in matching military families' needs with successful programs is that military family support providers' outreach efforts are reaching a very limited audience. Among the NMFA survey respondents and focus group participants, 78% do not live on a military installation. Furthermore, 26% live 50 miles or more from any military installation. Support providers at many installations have achieved incredible marketing success for families living there. By advertising on installation TV channels, providing military support program information for installation publications, direct mailing to housing areas, and posting information in locations such as commissaries, exchanges and child development centers, support providers capture the attention of military families who frequent those venues. The issue, however, lies in making the connection with the majority of families who do not use or have regular access to these resources.

One successful way this obstacle has been overcome is through the use of web technology. Because so many active duty families do not live on an installation—and many Guard and Reserve families live even farther from any installation or unit support networks—web technology is essential at the Service, installation, and unit levels, not only to communicate important information to families, but also to give families an idea of the support programs and services available to them and, possibly, contact information for specific services in their area.

An illustration of web technology achieving success in raising awareness of available support services and providing support to families at the Service level can be seen in the Navy "Quality of Life Service Delivery System." The LIFELines Services Network captures the capability of internet technologies to support sailors, Marines and their

families especially through deployment. Regardless of families' proximity to an installation, Navy LIFELines provides a portal through which families can find an assortment of information on the military lifestyle. Deployment-specific information helps families know how to stay informed through their official chain of command, where to go for assistance with a multitude of issues including legal and financial matters and understanding the emotional cycles of deployment. Other installation and unit level websites are of great benefit to military families. Because web resources are not limited to families living inside the installation fence, they can increase Service-wide outreach to families, helping them face challenges revolving around the deployment of the servicemember.

Photot courtesy of US Army

Because outreach involves both making families aware of available services and enticing them to participate in those programs, the most successful program managers have sought creative ways of extending support to military families and letting them know of available services. The Combat Care program is one such initiative, implemented throughout United States Air Force Europe (USAFE). The program is a combined community effort that helps all family members, including children, cope with deployments, and the special stresses they bring. One part of the program, Combat Care Dinners, is an especially effective means of outreach. The dinners provide a monthly opportunity for the Family Service Center to show appreciation for families of deployed servicemembers, offer them a relaxing outlet to reduce stress, as well as an informal chance to share information. Invited families savor a family-friendly meal served by Family Service Center staff who volunteer their time at the event. At the March 2004 Combat Care Dinner at Ramstein Air Force Base, 92 families enjoyed dinner while having the opportunity to visit with the Readiness Non-Commissioned Officer, legal office staff, and a chaplain, who spent the evening circulating throughout the room. These key family readiness servicemembers talked with families about the Combat Care program, powers of attorney, taxes, and other family issues. This program is a model of outreach to all military families to make them aware of the services and support available to them.

Military family support providers need to continue to think outside the box and reach outside the installation gate to support families. While support providers often have programs in place to effectively help military families, new ways to deliver the message that these programs are available for all families are essential to actually helping them. One tool that is achieving this delivery is the use of web technologies to reach all families. Other outreach efforts also need to be developed to let military families know of available services and pull families into the military family support system to help in the challenges they face related to deployments.

Because web resources are not limited to families living inside the installation fence, they can increase Service-wide outreach to families.

Key communication recommendations

- Establish communication expectations prior to deployments and ensure regular communication flows between the command and families.
- Ensure command responsibility for including geographically dispersed families and families of augmented servicemembers in the unit communication process.
- Implement a Service-wide, institutional means of raising family readiness and deployment issues from the ground level up through the headquarters level and facilitate Service solutions to problems at various levels.
- Provide a far-reaching system for including extended family members in unit communications.
- Create and maintain Service, installation and unit websites that are user-friendly and contain timely and accurate information needed by families.
- Recognize the importance of and facilitate unit volunteer efforts to reach out to family members. Assign points of contact for posting unit volunteer information on installation and/or unit websites instead of spending additional resources for off-line websites.
- Develop a DoD-wide comprehensive marketing outreach plan to make all military families aware of available support services regardless of their Service affiliation or proximity to an installation.
- Continue efforts to educate families about TRICARE benefits and rules.
- Ensure continuity and accessibility of medical care, especially for Guard and Reserve families.

Selected Issue Discussion: TRICARE Challenges

With the many challenges brought on by deployments and high operational tempo following September 11, 2001, military families needed assurance that they could access their military health care benefit provided through TRICARE when needed. Families faced three major issues in dealing with TRICARE:

- Understanding the benefit, changes in the benefit and how to access care.
- Ensuring continuity of care, especially for families of mobilized Guard and Reserve members.
- Accessing care in a timely manner, whether from providers in military treatment facilities (MTFs) or from civilian providers willing to accept TRICARE patients.

Understanding the benefit and the rules inherent in the military medical system were most difficult for families of Guard and Reserve members called to active duty. The varieties of Guard or Reserve orders, the complexities of the TRICARE system, and the geographic dispersion of a unit's members and families combined to make communication about the benefit and access to assistance when a problem emerged very difficult. TRICARE contractors and representatives of the TRICARE region Lead Agents routinely conducted TRICARE briefings for members of units about to mobilize; unfortunately, in most cases, family members—the people who actually had to deal with the system once the servicemember deployed—were not in attendance.

Almost immediately after mobilizations began in late 2001, DoD eased the transition of Guard and Reserve families into TRICARE by creating a demonstration program to help patients maintain the continuity of care and continue seeing the family's civilian doctor at minimal cost under TRICARE Standard. The DoD TRICARE Management Activity, working with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs,

developed an extensive communication plan to inform Guard and Reserve servicemembers and families of the demonstration and their TRICARE options. Because Guard and Reserve families needed more information tailored for their needs, Congress included a provision in the FY 2004 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) mandating the appointment of reserve component Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinators to serve as Guard and Reserve contacts in regional lead agent offices. These positions, when filled, will help coordinate the flow of TRICARE information to Guard and Reserve members and their families and resolve claims and other concerns.

As Guard and Reserve members, their families, and the personnel who supported their medical needs became more familiar with issues that emerged in the transition from civilian employer-sponsored insurance to TRICARE, the transition for many families into TRICARE improved. Families having the most problems seemed to be those dealing with more complicated medical issues, such as having a family member with special needs or in the middle of treatment for a chronic condition. Many of the problems facing Guard and Reserve beneficiaries were related to their providers' reluctance to accept TRICARE patients because of unfamiliarity with TRICARE or belief that TRICARE rates were too low. Stories from Guard and Reserve families about their local providers' reluctance to participate in TRICARE were similar to those told by Coast Guard and other active duty families and military retirees located in areas with no military medical facilities. In the FY 2004 NDAA, Congress included provisions aimed at gathering information about providers' willingness to accept TRICARE patients and providing additional support to TRICARE Standard beneficiaries. Congressional interest in ensuring the medical readiness of Guard and Reserve members and in easing continuity of care for their families also contributed to the inclusion of several demonstration provisions in the NDAA designed to extend servicemembers' and families' eligibility for TRICARE benefits. While most Congressional efforts to support Guard and Reserve health care have focused on expanding eligibility to the TRICARE benefit, other proposals currently before Congress would ease continuity of care by providing the means for family members to remain with the servicemember's employer-sponsored insurance plan after the servicemember's activation.

Beneficiaries served by military hospitals experienced different types of access issues than those affecting Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserve families who live away from military installations. At several installations, active duty families reported that the deployment of military medical personnel, demands on medical staffs to support the mobilization and de-mobilization of Guard and Reserve members, and the need to care for wounded servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan caused their MTFs to disregard the promised access standards for beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE Prime. In many cases, MTFs appealed to the "patriotism" of active duty families, survivors, retirees and their families by telling them appointments were not currently available and asking them to wait, rather then sending them to the TRICARE civilian networks for care. In a few well-publicized incidents, active duty servicemembers were also told care was not available and they would have to wait. As the military Services continue to deploy medical personnel to support overseas missions and take on greater missions at home, the military health system must be properly resourced and organized to maintain beneficiary access to care. ■

Training

The importance of helping family members face challenges related to deployment must be embraced at all levels. Standardized and continuous training will reinforce the message that the system of support must be a priority for all parties. If this is not the case, families will not get the support they need and will have a greater struggle facing deployment-related challenges.

Photo courtesy of Fort Lee Public Affairs

Critical elements of training include:

- Training the command to embrace military family support as a priority and ensure all in the chain of command are accountable for that support.
- Training military family support providers to tailor their programs and services to meet the needs of families.
- Training all involved parties to support the specific needs of military children.
- Training all involved parties to help Guard and Reserve families face their unique challenges.

Command training

There are several ways training can immediately benefit the people who need it the most. For families to be informed and able to thrive during times of high OPTEMPO, the command must first be aware of available support programs and services. Therefore, the first step is to train the command to participate at all levels of family support. This comprehensive training must provide the command with the tools to wrap its arms around the family support system. The command's responsibility in establishing this priority also lies in the oversight of instruction for the rear party. Supervising and participating in the formal volunteer training process also falls under the responsibility of the command because volunteers are the front line of family support. All links in the chain between the command and families should also be trained to work together as a team to build a seamless support system for families. This solid system will help ensure that families do not flounder in overcoming challenges or fall through unexpected cracks. When the command makes family readiness a priority, it also establishes expectations and boundaries for volunteers that can help prevent burnout and rapid turnover.

> "No one is responsible for taking care of me and my family, but it would be nice to know that someone cared."
>
> —Interview with a military spouse

The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard have policies in place that outline how the unit team is required to communicate with and support families. The implementation of these policies, however, is often much different from the policy intent. Unit rear parties experiencing constant turnover create inconsistencies. The lack of required coordinated training of all parties involved with unit family support often results in indifference, misinformation, or chaos. Consistent team-oriented training would allow rear parties to know issues families might face during deployments, the resources available within the Service and the programs available in the community to help families. Unit volunteer networks in the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard are required to receive formal training prior to taking on their role in the official chain of communication. The Army provides a Family Readiness Group Guide to acquaint family volunteers, servicemembers, and families with deployment-related situations and available resources. Even when the training is required, commands must still ensure volunteers obtain training in a timely manner. The importance of this training lies in unit volunteers' knowledge of how the communication process works, knowing where to turn for answers in helping families, and understanding the parameters of the volunteer position they are holding.

This process reinforces the principle that command training is a first step in establishing family readiness as a priority in military readiness. Just as the command works with other support elements to make family readiness a priority, it is only natural that the command also communicates to the servicemember that family readiness is important. Because of the ongoing nature of the Global War on Terrorism, readiness must be constantly maintained. As the servicemember understands the crucial need for his or her family to be prepared and makes sure the family is in an ongoing state of preparedness, the servicemember also contributes to his or her own readiness requirements. The command must make time to ensure each servicemember understands the importance of family readiness, thus establishing the connection that the family knows how to use available support services to meet challenges faced in the servicemember's absence.

There is an undeniable trickle down effect of training the command to make family readiness a priority. By embodying that ideal and through oversight of the command representative and volunteer network, the command will work with this team to provide support in the best possible way. By encouraging and setting the example for servicemembers to make family support a priority, all members of the family support team will be able to help families face issues and solve problems as military operations continue at a high pace.

The importance of the command not only being responsible, but also accountable, for a working family readiness system can be seen in the handling of Family Care Plans. Under DoD policy, Family Care Plans are required of all servicemembers who are single parents, dual military couples with dependents, or sole caregivers of those with disabilities. The plans provide instruction for care in the event of short and long term absences of the servicemember. This policy also clearly states that commanders or supervisors are accountable for making sure these plans are in place. Some commanders failed to meet this objective during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Other commanders met the objective of having 100% Family Care Plans in place for those who needed them, but the plans failed as they were executed. Rear parties and servicemembers were left scrambling to make appropriate arrangements to take care of family members. This experience highlights the need for the command to embrace family support as a priority and be accountable for ensuring the system works to the utmost advantage of servicemembers and families.

> "A single parent or dual-military family has to give serious thought to their Family Care plan. There has got to be an agreement between the caregiver and the children involved. If either party feels uncomfortable with the situation, it could be a very bad situation," said SGM Charles Steele.
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> —Denver Baeulieu-Hains, "Family care plans essential for dual-military couples, single parents," *Herald Union*, 284th BSB, Friedberg, Giessen, February 4, 2003, p.14.

Training support providers

The training of military family support providers to tailor their programs and services to meet the changing needs of families as OPTEMPO remains high is also necessary. Since the Persian Gulf War, most Services recognized the need for on-going programs to prepare the entire military family for the military experience. "Military 101" programs specific to almost every Service have been implemented to provide spouses with a foundation of information as they adapt to their circumstances. The Navy Compass program, Army Family Team Building, the Air Force Heart Link program, and the Marine Corps LINKS program are all designed to introduce spouses to the military lifestyle. These voluntary participation programs have successfully met the need to educate spouses, build awareness, explain deployments, develop self-reliance, and help families prepare for deployments. Originally started by family members, these programs have been recognized as necessities by military family support providers to help families meet their own needs. As a result, management of these programs is provided by military family support providers and is indicative of the success being achieved in training providers to ensure they meet the needs of families.

Innovative responses to new challenges must be promulgated across the Services as servicemembers return and families are reunited. As servicemembers return from combat-oriented deployments, or after a series of multiple deployments, their transitional needs, and those of their families, are not necessarily the same as they face following traditional or non-combat deployments. In the NMFA analysis survey, 83% of respondents indicated their servicemember had deployed since September 11, 2001. Many expressed their concern over back-to-back deployments, little family time between deployments and uncharacteristically high amounts of time deployed within a two-year time period. Even the official DoD press service highlighted the readjustment concerns of a servicemember and his wife. This couple endured two long deployments that seemed to strengthen their marriage, but Operation Iraqi Freedom put a strain on their family that found them still adjusting months after the servicemember returned.[4] As the return and reunion process continues to unfold, military family support providers need to be sensitive to those returning from combat and multiple deployments and be trained to meet these differing needs in the short and long term. It is clear that the nature of OPTEMPO has changed and created different needs for servicemembers and families; military family support providers need to be taught to recognize these needs and address them accordingly.

One servicemember and his wife endured two long deployments that seemed to strengthen their marriage, but Operation Iraqi Freedom put a strain on their family that found them still adjusting months after the servicemember returned.

The importance of training military family support providers to tailor their programs and services to meet the needs of families can be seen in issues raised about access to family support. While it is convenient for military family support providers to work traditional hours and be in a central location, this does not always meet the needs of families, especially during deployment. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the focus of many military family support providers seemed to be on letting families know programs were "safe" and that they would remain intact during deployments. Focus group discussions among family members, however, revealed that the location and hours of military family support centers are more critical factors in determining whether family members will use programs and services. Because two thirds of families assigned to MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, live 40 miles away in Brandon, a MacDill Family Resource Center is located there.[5] Families of the active duty and Guard and Reserve members living off the installation can easily access resources as they are needed.

The Washington National Guard Family Program Center alters its hours to accommodate families who cannot necessarily take advantage of services offered during traditional hours. The Washington National Guard, like many other states, has opened Family Assistance Centers in armories throughout the state and divided the state into regions. A Family Assistance Center is located in each region, therefore bringing services closer to the families who need them. Similarly, Army Community Service (ACS) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, has instituted a standing program of having one main ACS office on the installation and five satellite offices throughout major command units and in one of the most remote family housing areas. These efforts bring the support services closer to the servicemembers and families so they can be more easily accessed. Military family support providers must be trained to coordinate programs and services with the needs of families and their geographic locations.

Training to support military children

Standardized and continuous training can make an immediate difference for military families throughout deployment in two particular areas. One of these areas is with military children. Of the NMFA survey respondents and focus group participants, 76% have children. According to the Educational Opportunities Directorate within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, military families include 1.2 million school-aged children. Just as the servicemember carries out his or her duties, children also

[4] Donna Miles, "Fort Campbell Families Adjusting to Newfound Togetherness," *American Forces Press Service*, March 25, 2004.

[5] Shannon Colavecchio-Van Sickler, "Helping Military Families," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, February 24, 2003, sec. 1, p.3.

serve. School is the child's job. Comprehensive training of all persons involved in military children's lives needs to be available in areas not only near military installations but especially throughout civilian communities where Guard and Reserve families live.

Photo courtesy of DoD

With the increase in OPTEMPO, the needs of military children at all developmental stages tend to change during deployments. Parents, educators, care givers, and mentors need to be trained to recognize and address children's unique deployment-related needs. In training all parties to recognize what children need to be able to cope, it is also critical that care givers understand normal behavior as well as how and when to pursue professional help. All who are part of children's lives need also to be trained not to assume that, if children are busy or distracted, their special needs and thoughts of the absent servicemember go away. Resounding trends seen in survey and focus group responses show parents reporting high levels of stress in their children, especially in relation to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Parents also indicated a need for resources to guide them in helping their children cope with what they are experiencing and feeling. This was especially needed by parents of teenagers, who stated programs and activities are lacking even to distract the teens, let alone help them deal with their emotions.

Training to support the needs of military children should be ongoing and not just provided as a band-aid during wartime situations. As OPTEMPO remains high and families endure continuous cycles of mobilization, predeployment, deployment, and reintegration, the needs of children also continue to follow these cycles. Stand Hand in Hand is a model for programs to help military families, particularly children, during the cycles of deployment. The Train the Trainer program of Stand Hand in Hand serves families in the Navy Region Northwest and was created by family members of the USS Carl Vinson. It focuses on the unique lifestyle of military families and helps provide the tools to support children, especially during deployments. This training program presented in Bremerton, Washington, is sponsored by the Fleet and Family Support Center and is conducted by a children's counselor, servicemember, and military family support staff. The presenters discuss the roles of educators, parents and children in helping children navigate the military lifestyle. This training helps all parties understand the military culture, the operational and emotional cycles of deployment and their impact on children, and how support groups for children can be of benefit.

The Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) Europe Action Plan For Deployment Interventions also illustrates the vital nature and success of a proactive training approach in making a difference in the lives of military children. The plan strives to pull together military family support services and community resources for the benefit of students and parents and looks to incorporate communication between students and deployed servicemembers through the schools. It encourages school personnel to become part of the support system for families of deployed servicemembers and recognizes the importance of training school officials to identify deployment-related needs in children and help them deal with those needs. The plan spells out components of integrating military family support services and school programs, developing and implementing crisis intervention, helping personnel be sensitive to parents and students who are dealing with a deployment of the servicemember, and seeking out other ways to support communities of deployed servicemembers. Personnel roles are defined in the plan to provide further guidance and perspective for working as individuals and as a team to be of the greatest benefit to students and parents.

Stand Hand in Hand — www.navylifepnw.com/navylife/ffsc/hand_inHand.asp

Training to support Guard and Reserve families

Another area in which training can make an immediate difference for military families is in helping Guard and Reserve members and families understand their rights, benefits, and entitlements. The continuous training of all entities involved with the Guard and Reserve—military family support providers, the command, rear party, volunteer networks, servicemembers and their families—can allow for a proactive approach to challenges families experience from mobilization through demobilization.

For many of these families, several stumbling blocks occur especially when the servicemember is rapidly mobilized and subsequently deployed for extended periods of time. Legal, financial, employment and health care issues are areas of training needed to ensure as smooth a transition as possible to the military lifestyle for servicemembers and their families. A clear understanding of how Guard and Reserve members will receive pay, when the servicemember is eligible for special pays, what those special pays mean and how pay changes through mobilization, deployment and demobilization can allow all parties to anticipate and resolve problems families may face. The same runs true in training all involved to understand the protections included in the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Relief Act. In conjunction with training families to understand these rights, benefits and entitlements, it is just as important to train them to know how to access information and help when issues arise.

The area of overwhelming need for training with the Guard and Reserve is in helping families make the transition to TRICARE. The transition process, eligibility requirements, enrollment procedures, benefits, options for care, and disenrollment can be daunting. The education of all entities involved with helping families can aid in making a more manageable, less confusing, and smoother hand off into and out of the military health care system. One success story of military family support providers adapting their services to meet the needs of families is that of the 310th Air Wing, an Air Force Reserve unit. As mobilizations and deployments began out of the Youngstown, Ohio, Air Reserve Base, the 310th family support providers saw a need to help families deal with health care transition issues. In order to enroll families in TRICARE, reenroll families when they changed regions, and answer questions families had about TRICARE, military family support providers initiated and completed the TRICARE training necessary to become Health Benefits Advisors, a position usually limited to Military Treatment Facility staff. As Health Benefits Advisors, the military family support staff could help Air Force Reserve families understand their benefits, distribute Primary Care Manager lists, and work with the regional TRICARE office to confirm policy and procedures regarding specific problems. These proactive efforts saved reservists and families from having to drive one or two hours to a TRICARE office to learn about benefits and solve problems. By taking on the responsibility to become the "unofficial" experts and the link to the official experts on TRICARE for mobilized reservists and families, this particular military family support staff exemplified the true nature of adapting services to meet family needs.

Often the change from a civilian way of life to a military way of life catches Guard and Reserve families operating under the natural idea that the servicemember is active duty but the family is still Guard or Reserve.

Often the change from a civilian way of life to a military way of life catches Guard and Reserve families operating under the natural idea that the servicemember is active duty but the family is still Guard or Reserve. By training all individuals involved regarding the rights, benefits and entitlements, families can make the connection that, for a time, their lives will be different and they can be better prepared to handle the challenges inherent with that different lifestyle.

Key training recommendations

- Require formalized training of unit commanders, rear party personnel and unit volunteers together so all receive the same core information, have similar expectations, and understand the role of each party.
- Train servicemembers that family readiness is part of servicemember readiness.
- Require servicemember Family Care Plans to be reasonable, workable and agreeable to the parties named as family care providers.
- Enforce measures of command accountability to make the entire concept of family readiness work well.
- Provide robust return, reunion and reintegration programs for servicemembers and families as the nature and length of deployments continue to change.
- Ensure military family support providers are trained to adapt support service locations and hours so they are most accessible to the families they serve.
- Furnish training to parents, school personnel, and child care providers about how to help children cope, especially with longer deployments and repeated deployments. Include ways that local military entities at installations and within units can assist.
- Continuously train all entities involved with the Guard and Reserve to know rights, benefits, and entitlements throughout the process of mobilization to demobilization.
- Provide more robust, preventive counseling services for servicemembers and families, especially children. Train servicemembers and families to know when to seek professional help related to their circumstances. Ensure that commanders encourage participation in these services without danger to the servicemember's career.
- Expand child care services to meet the changing needs of families and to facilitate their participation in training opportunities. These may include hourly care, respite care, care for children with special needs or mild illnesses, evening care, weekend care, or continuous care under certain circumstances.

Selected Issue Discussion: Mental Health

As servicemembers and families experience numerous, lengthy, and dangerous deployments, the need for confidential, preventive mental health services has dramatically increased. To deal with the increased stress and uncertainty related to deployments, some families seek out these services for emotional support, an outlet to vent, and a validation that their feelings are normal. Mental health services needed throughout the different phases of deployment include individual counseling for servicemembers, spouses, children, and sometimes for the family as a whole.

As the number and frequency of deployments have increased, so has the need for mental health services for servicemembers and families. A few short months after Marines began leaving Camp Pendleton, California, for Operation Iraqi Freedom in early 2003, the Naval Hospital's Mental Health Department noted an increase of 100 appointments per month.[6] According to the commander of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, of the 12,000 soldiers from the war on terror (mostly from Iraq) treated there, between 8 and 10 % had psychiatric or behavioral health issues.[7] In addition, 5% of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division based out of Fort Stewart, Georgia, sought counseling for combat stress or redeployment issues.[8] In early 2003, the Marine Corps stated it anticipated 15% of its personnel would have readjustment problems and that it was preparing to coordinate with community resources to meet those needs.[9] According to a family readiness coordinator at an Army installation heavily impacted by deployments in the past several years, more Soldiers and families than ever before were turning to free and confidential counseling provided by the military to deal with readjustment issues.

Great strides can be made to ensure servicemembers and families receive the help they need wherever they are. While TRICARE provides robust benefits to a servicemember or family member diagnosed with a mental illness, preventive care is nonexistent and information to beneficiaries on how to access mental health services is sorely lacking. Because of these gaps families are steered toward other resources such as Service employee assistance-type programs, chaplains, and school counseling groups if they are available. Steps must also be taken to help families understand what emotions are normal and what means of coping are available throughout cycles of deployment. Families need to know what behavior of the returned servicemember or the child who misses the deployed servicemember is not normal, when to seek professional help, and where that confidential help can be found.

The need for mental health services will continue to rise as cycles of deployment remain almost constant. The military Services must balance the demand for mental health personnel in theater and at home to help servicemembers and families deal with unique emotional challenges and stresses related to the nature and duration of continued deployments. ■

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[6] Brian La May, *Marine Corps News*, May 8, 2003.

[7] *United Press International*, "10% At Hospital Had Mental Health Problems," February 19, 2004.

[8] Steven Lee Myers, "Returning From Iraq War Not So Simple for Soldiers," *New York Times*, September 13, 2003.

[9] Marine Corps Update, Joint DoD Family Readiness Working Group meeting, April 29, 2003.

Selected Issue Discussion: Child Care

Child care is an essential component of family readiness, especially in the training environment necessitated by high OPTEMPO and deployments. Of the NMFA survey and focus group participants, 76% had dependent children. Among Guard and Reserve respondents, 72.4% had children. More than 6% of servicemembers are single parents; the number of spouses employed outside the home remains more than 60%.[10]

At the end of 2002, the military Services were providing child care through 900 Child Development Centers at 300 locations and in more than 9,000 family child care homes. These resources met a combined 65% of child care needs of active duty servicemembers, not including mobilized Guard and Reserve members.[11] Even when OPTEMPO is not high, finding child care can be a cause of stress for military families. It becomes even more critical as servicemembers continue to deploy and work longer hours at their duty station. As one parent seeks to balance all of the responsibilities at home when the servicemember is unavailable, the need for more hourly child care becomes imperative. Increases in the need for hourly child care are paralleled by increased need for child care for children with special needs and respite child care when a parent simply needs a break. Because of the importance of family member participation in activities promoting and ensuring family readiness, child care must be available for these activities.

Certain military families experience unique child care circumstances. Often Guard and Reserve families do not live near enough to installations to take advantage of Child Development Centers and family child care homes. Military families who live on or near an installation of a different Service may find access to child care at that installation, but sometimes at a lower priority than families belonging to the installation's parent Service.

Some programs have emerged to meet the child care needs of families as the pace of military operations remains high. The Air Force's Extended Duty Child Care program helps in numerous locations to provide waived-cost emergency child care, aid in covering evening and weekend child care, and child care for children with mild illnesses. The Air Force has also piloted a Home Community Program to provide family child care homes in communities with a more concentrated Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard presence.[12] The Navy has piloted highly successful programs in two different geographic locations offering round the clock child care and group homes for a limited number of children needing up to 72 hours of continuous care[13] At 85 installations, the Army offers extended hours for children in Child Development Centers and family child care homes, with some of these homes providing child care for up to 60 days, if needed.[14] Some Marine Corps installations ensure families are not turned away from Child Development Centers for hourly and respite care under any circumstances and provide child care for activities contributing and related to family readiness. Programs at installations across the Services offer regular respite child care opportunities, as well, so that parents can take advantage of much-needed time for themselves.

As military families continue to balance demands of work and home life, plentiful and accommodating child care services can make all the difference in reducing the constant stressors incurred as mobilization, deployments and longer work hours remain the norm. ■

[10] U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, Total Force Subcommittee, Joint Statement of The Military Coalition, 108th Cong., 1st sess., March 12, 2003.

[11] U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, Total Force Subcommittee, Statement of the Honorable David S. Chu, Undersecretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), 108th Cong., 1st sess., March 13, 2003.

[12] Judy Pearson, "Air Force Introduces Expanded Child-Care Options in Conjunction with Woman-Owned Small Business," INTECS International, Inc., www.dcmilitary.com/airforce (accessed December 12, 2003).

[13] Patricia Klime, "Double Duty," *Navy Times*, November 11, 2002, p.14.

[14] U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Personnel Subcommittee and U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Child and Youth Subcommittee, Statement of M.A. Lucas, Director, Army Child and Youth Services, U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, 108th Cong., 1st sess., June 24, 2003.

Partnerships

Opportunities exist to build and sustain partnerships within the military Services, between the Services, and with other entities to benefit military families greatly as they face deployments and a continued high OPTEMPO. By pulling together widespread resources, proactive steps can be in place to prevent issues involved with deployments from reaching emergency levels and can help families know how to best solve problems as they arise.

Photo courtesy of DoD

Critical partnership issues include:

- Building and maintaining partnerships within and between Services to achieve maximum joint accessibility, availability and benefit for military families.
- Developing and sustaining partnerships between the military and civilian communities to augment support services provided by the military.
- Expanding partnerships between the military and employers to promote mutual support and understanding regarding the Guard and Reserves.

Partnerships within and between services

All military families experiencing separations from the servicemember have common needs. In order to match those needs with available support, partnership opportunities to help families exist within military family support services. As Guard and Reserve members are relied upon more and more to carry out military missions, the need to build collaborative efforts to ensure access to and availability of military family support services regardless of Service affiliation is crucial.

One of the best examples of a successful military family support partnership can be seen in the Pentagon Family Assistance Center. In response to the September 11, 2001 attack on the Pentagon, the first joint military family assistance center was created for families to get accurate and timely information and make use of a wide range of support services. The Pentagon Family Assistance Center ended up overseeing more than 45 support entities and served as the main location for information, crisis assistance, casualty coordination, and safe haven for the families of victims. This incredible partnership serves as an ultimate example of the level of support that can be achieved for families. In light of this achievement, some installations prepared comprehensive support partnerships modeled after the Pentagon Family Assistance Center in order to take a proactive approach to potential crises in their communities.

The shared success of the Pentagon Family Assistance Center allowed for the creation of an innovative joint Service collaborative opportunity, the Joint Family Readiness Working Group. Created by the Office of Military Community and Family Policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the working group pulled together OSD and headquarters family support staff from each Service, including the reserve components. It also invited associations such as the American Red Cross and NMFA to participate. The group's charge was to look at the needs of and support for all servicemembers and their families. Its meetings provided avenues for sharing information and best practices, as well as recognizing gaps in support between the components of all Services. In particular, the working group helped identify and address specific family support issues related to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Some of these issues included: identifying families at high risk and not likely to tap into available support services, promoting the use of technology to share information with families and help them communicate with deployed servicemembers, strengthening unit volunteer efforts, and ensuring all military families would be able to access services regardless of geographic location or branch

of Service. Regular communication among group members continues to facilitate the improvement, development, and implementation of military family support services that are needed most.

Partnerships at the installation level within Services can also be of incredible value to military families as they deal with deployment-related challenges. As military Services and installations use more and more contractors to provide necessary services to military families, a working relationship needs to be in place to make sure services are easily obtainable from the contractors.

One overwhelming and unanticipated issue that must be dealt with by many entities working in concert concerns the acceptance of powers of attorney. The military Services promote and provide powers of attorney as a vital resource for families while the servicemember is deployed. Military Services also endorse the use of powers of attorney as an acceptable document for spouses or parents to use in obtaining needed services or to manage financial affairs in the servicemember's absence. However, powers of attorney are not consistently being accepted by agencies on installations, to include credit unions, banks, finance offices and relief agencies, even though the documents are written by legal services on the same installation. In one instance, an installation finance office would not allow a spouse to obtain the deployed servicemember's Leave and Earnings Statement despite having a fourteen page power of attorney. Such inconsistencies do not help families in times of their greatest need. When installation legal offices have to take on the responsibility of calling agencies on a monthly basis to check power of attorney acceptance policies, the good intention of this service is undermined.

> "Unfortunately, for the system, sweet talking and making phone calls was much more effective than anything on paper."
>
> —Interview with a military spouse

Problems with powers of attorney were even more frustrating for Guard and Reserve families. These families faced unique circumstances when powers of attorney were drawn up to be valid for a particular time period and their servicemember's absence extended beyond that time. Furthermore, powers of attorney were sometimes not honored as an acceptable document in resolving pay issues and were flat-out rejected by some civilian agencies to include banks. Situations such as these drain the time and energies of families who must focus on other, often more pressing, issues.

Successful partnership opportunities at the installation level can serve as models for solving problems such as the acceptance of powers of attorney. One long-standing installation-based partnership is that of the Air Force Reserve's 94th Airlift Wing at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia. In 1993, it established an Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee coordinating military family support services from every installation and Service in the state of Georgia. This proactive networking and partnership opportunity successfully pulls together the best support for all military families wherever they are in the state. The effort has helped and continues to help families during numerous mobilizations and deployments for the Global War on Terrorism. Other Inter-Service Family Assistance Committees are working throughout the United States. Providing multiservice opportunities for training and assistance in an effort to ensure total force family readiness, they should be replicated in more locations.

Partnerships between the military and communities

Military partnerships must not only be built and nourished within and between military Service offices and agencies, but also between the military and civilian communities. Partnerships between the military and civilian community augment military family support services especially because the majority of military families do not live on an installation. In partnering, these entities recognize the connection George Washington made in saying "When we assumed the Soldier we did not lay aside the Citizen." Military families are a vital part of the community and the community is vital to the military. In general, civilian communities support the military and want to help servicemembers and families. Through shared partnerships communities gain a direction for effectively helping military families especially during deployment.

One partnership between the military and civilian sector that can be of greater benefit for military families as OPTEMPO remains high is with the local media. In light of the influence the media has had on families during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and because many Guard and Reserve families view the media as their main source of information, military partnerships with local media can help promote an awareness of support programs and services in their area. Local military interest stories about programs and services and local media websites highlighting information specifically for military families help them know what assistance is available. An example of this working relationship can be seen in the local media of Richmond, Virginia. The Central Virginia Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Committee and the Richmond Chapter of the American Red Cross paired up with a local television news station for an on-air call in session. The 90-minute event enabled members of the National Guard and Reserve and their employers to call in and have their questions answered regarding the mobilization of forces as well as military leave procedures. This partnership provided an open and proactive venue for reserve component members, families, and employers to acquire the unique knowledge they needed.

Many Guard and Reserve families view the media as their main source of information.

Along the same lines, the *Virginian-Pilot*, one of the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area newspapers, in cooperation with the Fleet and Family Support Center prominently displays military-oriented information on its website. In addition to general military information, the site features local installation information, such as: ship finders, updated military news, talk-net boards, a newcomer's guide, and a deployment guide. Further information includes tips for homecomings, finances, relocating, and communicating with deployed servicemembers. Military partnerships with the civilian local media can be of great benefit to military families as they search for ways to handle deployment-related issues. These partnerships can provide tools for families living away from installations to get information on available support services.

One particular area where partnerships between communities and the military can be of the utmost benefit for military families is in schools. With more than 1.2 million active duty and Guard and Reserve school-aged children, it is essential to establish working relationships with the military and schools to assist children coping with deployments and war. Schools are the institutions where children spend most of their time outside of their homes. Partnerships between the military and schools facilitate on-going communications to ensure a safe, caring, and effectively nurturing environment for children. They can create opportunities to make sure all involved in the lives of children have a comprehensive understanding of the military culture and deployment issues. These working relationships can help provide children with the skills they need to cope, help parents and educators understand how military experiences can affect children and help these parties know when to seek professional assistance. Furthermore, military and school partnerships can help identify children who are experiencing changes related to the servicemember's military situation and build support groups for children and teens to discuss their feelings in a safe environment. These partnerships are especially necessary in the Guard and Reserve communities that may not have instant access to the same resources found at military installations. Schools can also be a source of information and support for care givers.

The NMFA analysis team found several examples illustrating the benefits of the military and schools working in tandem to help military children deal with challenges related to deployments and war. The overwhelming success of a military and school partnership making a difference in the lives of military children can be seen in the video teleconferencing broadcast of high school graduation in Wiesbaden, Germany to servicemember parents in Iraq in the spring of 2003.[15] Military and school entities at Camp Pendleton, California, cooperated to facilitate the use of web cameras in some classrooms to provide deployed Marines and sailors a chance to be a part of their children's

Virginian-Pilot — www.hamptonroads.com/military/deployments

[15] Jessica Inigo, "Modern technology allowing deployed parents to attend DoDDS commencement," *Stars and Stripes*, European ed., June 6, 2003.

daily routine, if they had access to technology in theater. A DoDDS elementary school in Aviano, Italy also developed a supportive environment for children dealing with the deployment of a family servicemember. Aviano Elementary School allows any student with a deployed parent or loved one to receive a membership card to the "Clubhouse." Students are eligible to join this program as soon as the servicemember knows he or she is being deployed and can remain a member until after the servicemember returns. The "Clubhouse" program gives students an opportunity to be with others who are experiencing a similar situation and participate in grade level appropriate activities. Teachers can assist students in dealing with the stress of deployments and can watch for signs of distress as well.

Working hand in hand with military and school partnerships for the benefit of military children are partnerships between the military and youth programs. Through military partnerships with community youth programs, children are provided an outlet for energies and a distractive stress management tool as they cope with the absence of the servicemember. Initiatives such as the Youth and Development Specialist for the Washington State National Guard participating in a network of state youth service providers can be of incredible benefit for military youth and teens. It helps to coordinate services, let families know of programs in local areas across the state, and prevents local communities and units from reinventing the wheel.

Photo courtesy of "OnGuard"

Other working partnerships illustrate how successful coordination of youth programs makes a difference in the lives of military children experiencing the deployment of a parent. The Boys and Girls Clubs of America and 4-H have opened their hearts and doors to military children, especially to children in Guard and Reserve families who often do not live anywhere near an installation.[16] Military children can participate in these programs for a small cost or even at no cost. The Boys and Girls Clubs of America alone generously provided $5.8 million in grants, gifts, marketing and scholarships for military children in one year. While more than 400 youth centers serve military children on and near installations, partnerships between the military and community youth programs remain especially significant and valuable for all military children during times of deployment.[17]

As families experience lengthy, frequent, and uncertain deployments, they find stability and comfort through religious programs and in the presence of religious leaders. Of NMFA survey respondents identifying religious programs as a means of support during recent high OPTEMPO, 81% replied favorably to the quality and availability of these services. This statistic validates the need for the military to build strong and inclusive relationships with community religious leaders. Military chaplains are often seen as a back-up to military family support services, especially in crisis situations. Because the majority of military families do not live on an installation, it is important for community religious leaders to also know the military culture and be an extension of this back up to military family support services.

At Fort Lee, Virginia, one such working partnership between military and community religious programs supports the numerous Guard and Reserve units from several states that mobilized through and deployed from the installation. As servicemembers prepared to return from deployments through Fort Lee, Army religious program staff saw a need to involve religious leaders from the local community and other states to participate in reunion and reintegration training. Community religious leaders from as far away as Ohio were taught by military chaplains about typical behavior for returning servicemembers, participated in practical exercises and were even welcome to attend "decompression" briefings from which they could carry away information and resources. This partnership between the military and community

[16] U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Personnel Subcommittee and U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Child and Youth Subcommittee, Statement of Ms. M.A. Lucas, Director, Army Child and Youth Services, U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, 108th Cong., 1st sess., June 24, 2003.

[17] U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Personnel Subcommittee and U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Child and Youth Subcommittee, Statement of John M. Molino, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), 108th Cong., 1st sess., June 24, 2003.

religious programs provides a proactive approach as servicemembers are reintegrated into their communities and with their families. Continued and expanded partnerships between the military and community religious leaders can be of extensive benefit to military families during all phases of deployment, but especially as servicemembers continue to return from traditional, frequent, dangerous, or lengthy deployments.

Partnerships between the military and employers

As its commitments around the world increase, the U.S. military has relied more and more on National Guard and Reserve members. As of December 31, 2003, a total of 319,193 Guard and Reserve members had been called upon to serve in the Global War on Terrorism. Just as these Guard and Reserve members must make a full transition into the military lifestyle, civilian employers must also make adjustments. Continued and expanded partnerships must exist between the military and employers to help servicemembers and employers navigate their obligation and commitment to one another. These partnerships can foster a sense of stability for Guard and Reserve families as they face numerous other unknowns surrounding the mobilization and deployment of the servicemember.

An expansive partnership between the military and employers currently exists through the National Committee on Employer Support for Guard and Reserve (ESGR). This agency falls within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, with a volunteer chair appointed by the President and reporting to the Secretary of Defense. The ESGR acts as a liaison between the military and employers and helps support employers affected by mobilizations of Guard and Reserve members.

> "A survey released in May by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 44% of its members had employees called to active duty, yet 38% of the respondents did not understand their obligations to employees on military leave or how others in the workplace are effected. 88% said their companies were supportive of activated employees."
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> —Joan Fleischer Tamen, "Welcome Back, Soldier," Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*, June 30, 2003.

Through numerous programs and outreach initiatives, the ESGR focuses on ensuring public and private employer support for and commitment to the military service of employees. These programs include signed statements of support from employers and recognition of employers who go above and beyond the legal requirements to support employees who are a part of the Guard and Reserve. The "Briefings with the Boss" program brings together employers, military commanders and other community leaders to discuss and mutually understand the importance and role of the Guard and Reserve and issues surrounding Guard and Reserve members' relationships with employers. Additionally, the "Bosslift" program actually takes Guard and Reserve employers to military training sites to help employers better understand the military lifestyle and facilitate discussions on employee military service and employer support.[18]

In the past several years, many large corporations have worked with the ESGR to go beyond the requirements of the law for mobilized Guard and Reserve employees. Some have offered support by providing specific periods of continued or differential pay, medical benefits, and retirement benefits to their mobilized Guard and Reserve employees. Smaller businesses employing Guard and Reserve members have faced particularly difficult challenges as mobilizations occurred. There are, however, numerous examples of smaller employers and local government entities making sacrifices to show support of their mobilized Guard and Reserve employees in the same way as larger businesses.

The partnership through the ESGR between the military and employers allows for systems to be in place to establish a firm connection between employers and Guard and Reserve members and quickly resolve issues as they arise. These partner-

[18] www.esgr.com

ships can alleviate concerns Guard and Reserve servicemembers and families have about their financial situations, medical coverage, and job security as they face numerous other uncertainties involved with the mobilization, deployment, and demobilization of the servicemember. Additionally, these partnerships provide a means of recognizing the sacrifice of Guard and Reserve members and families that can help sustain them as they draw on the support of the community.

On a smaller scale, the Air National Guard fosters successful partnerships with employers through its "Your Guardians of Freedom" program. The program was initially designed to thank employers of Air National Guard members who were called to active duty following September 11, 2001. This program to reach out to employers enjoyed such large success that it was recently unveiled as an outreach program—to also include spouses, families, and parents—for use throughout the entire Air Force. The employer aspect of the expanded program extends direct appreciation from Air Force senior leadership to reserve component employers. Since the extended program was launched in the fall of 2002, more than 59,000 letters of appreciation and E-pins (pins recognizing employer support of the Guard and Reserve) have been sent to employers across the country. Letters and pins are also available for parents of Air Force members. This program stands as a model of continued success to not only reach out to employers working with the Air Force, but also to help inform and recognize all involved supporting the efforts of all airmen.[19]

Key partnership recommendations

- Create more partnerships to enhance joint accessibility to and consistency of military family support programs and services regardless of geographic location.
- Expand upon the model provided at the DoD headquarters level through the Joint Family Readiness Working Group to implement joint groups at state and local levels.
- Enforce the requirement for One Source to provide feedback to military family support providers and commanders on trends in services requested by family members. Ensure installations and units provide updated information on available services to One Source on a regular basis.
- Form partnerships between the military, agencies on the installation, and civilian entities to ensure powers of attorney drawn up by military legal authorities are accepted.
- Develop working relationships between military public affairs and local media outlets to reach the widest audience possible about services available to families, common challenges families face, and how to solve issues as they arise.
- Increase partnerships between commands, parents, and school officials to serve the changing needs of military children, regardless of geographic location. Encourage more military-to-school and school-to-school partnerships to share expertise and best practices.
- Continue to cultivate partnerships with local community services to support child and youth needs especially during times of high OPTEMPO.
- Encourage expanded programs between military and community religious leaders to support all servicemembers and families during all phases of mobilizations and deployments.
- Establish additional support programs to facilitate understanding of and support between employers and Guard and Reserve servicemembers and families.

[19] www.yourguardiansoffreedom.com

Photo courtesy of DoD

"With the increasing need for Guard and Reserve troops, America's Employers are inextricably linked to the nation's defense by sharing their most precious assets, their employees."

—Bob Hollingsworth, Executive Director, National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. "ESGR announces 2004 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award Recipients."

Photo courtesy of NMFA

Selected Issue Discussion: One Source

There is one potential area where partnerships within each Service and between military Services working jointly can ensure families have access to and availability of information. Each individual Service within DoD has contracted with the same private company to provide a round-the-clock employee assistance information and referral service. All active duty, National Guard and Reserve families have been able to use and benefit from One Source, a one-stop resource accessed through toll free telephone numbers and websites. The Marine Corps was the first to launch One Source Service-wide in January 2003 just as Marines began deploying in large numbers. By July of that year more than 22,000 calls and emails had been received. The answers to these inquiries helped families deal with deployment-related challenges and particularly aided Marine reservists and their families acclimate to unfamiliar requirements and procedures. One Source also provides basic life skill information, as well, helping to reduce some of the burdens on already stressed out families.

While the One Source program is newer to some Services than to others and each Service currently "owns" its own One Source, this tool has the potential to become the perfect opportunity to provide joint family support services. This opportunity is anticipated to become reality in the summer of 2004 as the resource will begin operating under a universal "Military One Source" for all servicemembers and families regardless of Service affiliation. The achievement of a joint One Source, while incorporating Service-specific information as needed, will eliminate the duplication of efforts and recognize the fair amount of common challenges all military families face.

As the One Source program moves to be a joint resource, this partnership must also be extended to include continuous communication at the installation level in order to serve families more effectively. A loop is needed to facilitate the capturing of general information from One Source shared not only with the headquarters level, but also with installations. In this way, military family support providers can be aware of the needs of families in a timely manner so programs and services can be adjusted to meet those needs. Likewise, this loop must also include the sharing of up to date and accurate information about local programs and services between installation military family support providers and the One Source contractor. This will further enhance outreach to families and will allow those using One Source to learn of the best resources available on the local level. ■

Community Support

One of the greatest sources of support for all military families during deployment can be found through community efforts. Military families do not often seek out special support or acknowledgement for the sacrifices they make and challenges they face. As communities across the country have poured out their support, however, servicemembers and families have been bolstered and touched by these efforts. This support has enabled many families and servicemembers to sustain themselves through greater than expected challenges. Thus, the vital role of and need for community efforts must be recognized.

> "No matter how big or small the problem, help is available."
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> —First Lady Mary Pawlenty, Minnesota. Senior Airman Cheryl Hackley, "Families 'guarded' while loved ones deploy for their country," *The OnGuard*, January 2004, p.4.

During deployments, state and local community efforts have reached out to military families, determined their needs, and filled in gaps families may sometimes have been hard-pressed to fill for themselves. Several states, seeing the needs of some Guard and Reserve families struggling to make ends meet, enacted legislation enabling families to access emergency funds. These programs also provide a way for individual citizens to donate money to assist Guard and Reserve families. A forerunner of these programs is the Illinois Military Family Relief Fund. The fund provides grants to families of Illinois Guard and Reserve members who have been called to active duty.[20] Any Guard or Reserve family with need is able to receive $500 for help in paying rent, utility bills, and day care. Guard and Reserve members deployed for at least 30 days are eligible to receive an extra $500-$2,000 annually. More than one half million dollars—donated by Illinois residents either directly or through a check-off box on their tax returns—have been distributed from the fund for Guard and Reserve families.

Photo courtesy of NMFA

The First Lady of Minnesota helped to establish a program to connect volunteer services with the needs of military families across the state. The Military Care Initiative allows community organizations to register the types of volunteer services they can provide military families. The matching of these services with requests for assistance from military families lets families know they are being cared for by their community.

While levels of community support in local areas can vary, members of many communities go above and beyond to make sure military families are recognized and appreciated. In response to a planned anti-war protest in Tacoma, Washington, a group of well-wishers and supporters decorated and continue to man an area bridge to show their support and appreciation for the military, servicemembers, and families. For military families living in locations where they sometimes feel the need to hide their affiliation to the military, these acts of acknowledgement and thanks remind them that their sacrifices are deeply appreciated.

Learning that their servicemember has been wounded can be an incredibly scary time for military families. Thanks in part to Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD, 2nd) travelers are able to donate frequent flyer miles to "Operation Hero Miles." Originally started as a means to provide free transportation within the United States for troops on Rest and Recuperation leave from Iraq and Afghanistan, the program has been expanded to help military families and wounded servicemembers. Servicemembers may use the donated miles to take leave or pass from military hospitals and visit families; families may use donated miles to visit the wounded servicemember at his or her bedside.

[20] "Christmas accentuates National Guard families' dilemma," *The Illinois Leader*, December 18, 2003.

More than 540 million miles have been donated to the Department of Defense and the Fisher House Foundation to assist families in these worrisome circumstances.[21]

One organization, the Community Connection for Military Families (CCMF), combines an outreach program of the Associated Ministries of Tacoma-Pierce County, Washington, with programs to enhance the lives of military families who live in the local community. One of the programs includes volunteers who make blankets to give to preschool-aged children of deployed servicemembers. As children receive the gift they are told that the blanket is for them to keep their favorite toy warm and safe, just as their mommy or daddy is keeping them safe while they are away. The children are also told that there are many people in their town who are thinking about them and someone special made the blanket just for them. These tokens of love for children can help maintain a connection with the deployed servicemember and let them know they are safe during confusing and anxious times.[22] They assure the entire military family that people in their community care about their well-being.

"I want the boys to have all the messages written from all these people. I can say, 'Your daddy's a hero,' but I'm just a mom ....I want to be able to show them that other people feel that way too."

—Melissa Givens, widow of PFC Jesse Givens. Li Fellers, "Fallen soldiers win final salute online," *Chicago Tribune*, December 27, 2003, p.1.

Other simple acts of support by individuals can provide military families comfort in their greatest hour of need. One man created an internet memorial dedicated to those who have lost their lives for our country during recent military missions. The site allows visitors to post messages of remembrance and thanks for these servicemembers. The memorial site serves as a source of comfort and allows grieving families to know the memories of their loved ones remain alive.

All military families, regardless of geographic location, are part of the communities in which they live. The overwhelming instances of community support for military families are too innumerable to name. However, these highlighted examples illustrate the expansive nature of community efforts to acknowledge and aid military families. The volume of community support for servicemembers and families since September 11, 2001 has had a considerable impact on helping military families face challenges in times of great uncertainty.

Fallen Heroes — www.fallenheroesmemorial.com

Key community support recommendations

- Recognize the importance of community support and encourage a continued commitment between military and community leaders to provide for the changing needs of military families.
- Encourage state and local government leaders to network and share programs that benefit military families.
- Appoint installation points of contact to coordinate and market available community support.

[21] http://www.heromiles.org.

[22] http://www.militaryfamilies.org

Conclusion

As the third anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack approaches, the resiliency of military families remains strong. According to one military spouse, "the normal of what [we] used to know is no more." The strength of military families serving on the home front to endure this changed environment is wearing down. In addition to dealing with routine experiences of military life such as relocating, achieving consistency in their children's education or seeking employment opportunities for spouses, military families face even more unique challenges due to the ongoing high OPTEMPO. As servicemembers deploy more frequently, for longer periods of time and at unpredictable intervals, it is essential for military families to have a comprehensive, responsive, and flexible system of support to prepare and sustain them.

Photo courtesy of US Coast Guard

The first essential component of a family support system is effective communication to enhance the sharing of information and outreach to military families. Communication expectations must be established and information easily and openly exchanged between the official chain of command and families. Processes of communication should include families geographically dispersed from the servicemember's unit, as well as families of servicemembers augmented to another unit or Service. Institutional means of raising family support issues are needed to facilitate Service leadership awareness of concerns and to solve problems at all levels. Effective and easy to use websites must be available to all family members; volunteer contributions and input to the sites should be encouraged and facilitated. Outreach initiatives can raise awareness among all military families of available support programs and services designed to enable them to thrive during a higher pace of military operations.

Standardized and continuous training throughout the military family support system is the second element in this comprehensive effort to provide families with the help they need as deployments remain frequent and for longer periods of time. A process of formal training will enable unit commanders, rear parties, and volunteers to work together to make the support system a true benefit to military families. Servicemembers must be trained by the command to make family readiness a priority. Required Family Care Plans should be agreeable to all involved and commanders held accountable for their implementation, as well as all aspects of family readiness. Military family support providers must tailor programs and services to meet changing needs of families as servicemembers return and families reunite. They should adapt the location and hours of support programs and services to be accessible for the families they serve. Individuals involved with children must be trained to recognize and support their deployment-related needs. All individuals involved with the Guard and Reserve must know of rights, benefits and entitlements and how to find information throughout the stages of mobilization and deployment. Families and servicemembers must have the information they need to know regarding when to seek professional help, with easily accessible preventive, confidential, and robust counseling available when needed.

Effective partnerships, the third element in a military family support system, must be replicated across the board to implement an all-encompassing and responsive effort by military and community agencies and organizations to benefit military families. Joint accessibility and consistency of programs are needed and successful programs must be emulated to help families during deployments. Partnerships between the military, installation agencies, and civilian entities should be enhanced to ensure the acceptance of powers of attorney as families access services. By working together, military public affairs officials and local media outlets can make families aware of available programs and services. The sharing of best practices and knowledge can

strengthen the essential relationships between the command, parents and school officials and community agencies necessary to meet the changing needs of military children. More partnerships between military and community religious leaders will further help servicemembers and families during all phases of deployments. Robust partnerships between the military and employers must also continue to facilitate understanding and support of Guard and Reserve members and families.

Photo courtesy of DoD

The broad effort to coordinate programs and services for military families must also include harnessing community goodwill and support on a global level. A continuous process of communicating between military and community leaders will enhance programs available through military family support providers. State and local government leaders must share information on supporting military families. Community support efforts must be funneled through a consolidated channel at installations to coordinate available offers of support with needs of families and avoid duplication of efforts. Community support efforts are the final piece in the comprehensive system of reaching out and helping families.

Military families understand and are prepared for particular uncertainties. To deal with uncertainties that go beyond this frame of reference families need additional help. A comprehensive, responsive support system will ensure the success of military families as they continue to face the unique challenges involved with the high pace of military operations.

"There is much we do not know about reunion and readjustment… In general, we know little about the process of readjustment within families over time and how different approaches to intervention stack up."

—U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Children of Families Subcommittee, Personnel Subcommittee of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Statement of Shelley M. MacDermid, Ph.D., Co-Director, Military Family Research Institute, 108th Cong., 1st sess., June 24, 2003.

This report provides a snapshot of military family support from September 11, 2001 through March 31, 2004. While this broad view provides considerable insights into the needs of families and the responses of military and civilian agencies and organizations to meet those needs, the necessity for further research in two distinct areas becomes apparent. Further study is required to pinpoint the needs of children during times of high OPTEMPO and determine the tools parents need to support their children and to help them cope in the best ways possible. More research is also needed on the return of servicemembers from deployment and the reunion and reintegration of families. This includes the long-term effects of and the best ways to assist families during these phases, especially during and after repeated deployments.

NMFA
National Military Family Association

Serving the Families of Those Who Serve

The National Military Family Association is the only national organization dedicated to identifying and resolving issues of concern to military families. Our mission is to serve the families of the seven uniformed services through education, information, and advocacy.

Funding for this analysis was provided by

Sears, Roebuck and Co. Through the Sears American Dream Campaign, Sears provided $2 million to NMFA for programs benefiting military families. In addition to this report, part of the funding was used to sponsor "Operation Purple," a summer camp program that allows children from all branches of the military services to interact with and learn from each other in an effort to help deal with deployment-related stress. Separately, NMFA and Sears recently published a unique keepsake book, *A Tribute to Military Families: Letters of Thanks from Our Nation's Children*, with inspiring essays from children on the importance of military families.

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